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WORKS

OF

JOHN OWEN, D.D.

EDITED

BY THOMAS RUSSELL, M.A.

WITH

MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS,
BY WILLIAM ORME.

VOL. XX.

CONTAINING

AN INQUIRY INTO THE ORIGINAL, NATURE, INSTITUTION, POWER, ORDER, AND COMMUNION OF EVANGELICAL CHURCHES;
AN ANSWER TO DR. STILLINGFLEET'S BOOK OF THE UNREASONABLENESS OF SEPARATION; AND
THE TRUE NATURE OF A GOSPEL CHURCH AND ITS GOVERNMENT.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR RICHARD BAYNES, 28, PATERNOSTER ROW:

And sold by J. Parker, Oxford; Deighton and Sons, Cambridge; D. Brown, Waugh and Innes, and H. S. Baynes and Co. Edinburgh; Chalmers and Collins, and M. Ogle, Glasgow; M. Keene, and R. M. Tims, Dublin.

1826.

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AN

INQUIRY

INTO

THE ORIGINAL, NATURE, INSTITUTION, POWER, ORDER, AND COMMUNION,

OF

EVANGELICAL CHURCHES;

THE FIRST PART:

WITH

AN ANSWER

TO THE DISCOURSE

OF

THE UNREASONABLENESS OF SEPARATION,

WRITTEN BY DR. EDWARD STILLINGFLEET, DEAN OF PAUL'S;

AND IN DEFENCE OF THE

VINDICATION OF THE NONCONFORMISTS

FROM

THE GUILT OF SCHISM.

Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.—Jer. vi. 16.

TO THE READER.

I THOUGHT to have wholly omitted the consideration of that part of the discourse of Dr. Stillingfleet in his preface, which concerneth the furtherance and promotion of the designs of the Papists, and interest of popery, by nonconformists; and accordingly I passed it by in the ensuing discourses. For I supposed that all unprejudiced persons would assign it unto the provocation which he seems to have received from those who answered his sermon, or otherwise, and so have passed it by, among such other excursions as divines are incident unto in their controversial writings. For that no countenance was given unto it, either from truth or any useful end as unto the present state of the Protestant religion amongst us, is evident unto all. But things are fallen out more according unto the humour of the times, or rather the supposed interest of some, than any just rational projections. For what other success this book hath had, I know not, nor am solicitous. Certain it is that many, of the same mind and persuasion with himself, have been encouraged and emboldened by it, confidently to report that the nonconformists are great promoters of the papal interest, yea, and do the work of the Papists to facilitate its introduction. For it is now made so evident in the preface of that book (I will not say on what topics, which seem not wakeful thoughts in such an important cause, and such a season as this is) that no man need doubt of the truth of it. Some indeed think that it were better at this time, to consider how to get

out popery from amongst us, than to contend about the ways whereby it came in, as unto our present danger of it. But if nothing will prevail against the resolutions of others, influenced by interest, and the sweetness of present advantages, to desist from this inquiry, it will be necessary that such an account be given of the true reasons and means of the advance of popery in this nation, as shall give them occasion to consider themselves and their own ways; for we are to look for the causes of such effects in things and means that are suited and fitted to be productive of them, so as that they cannot but follow on their being and operation; and not in cold stories, surmises, and far-fetched, or feigned inferences. And if we do reckon that the real advancement of religion depends only on the secular advancement of some that do profess it, we may be mistaken in our measures, as others have been before us.

But at present, the insinuations of that preface do seem to prevail much with those of the same party with its author; who want nothing at any time but the countenance of such a pen and story, to vent their ill will against nonconformists. Report, say they, and we will report it. But also as he said, 'Mendacium mendacio tegendum ne perpluat.' First, evil inventions alway tend unto, and stand in need of, new additions to render them useful unto their end, without which they quickly evaporate; wherefore, lest the insinuations of this worthy person should not be sufficiently subservient unto the uniting of all Protestants in one common interest against popery, which was the original design of the doctor's sermon, some have added unto it, that which is homogeneal as unto truth, and so easily mixing with the other discourse; that the nonconformists, some of them at least, do receive or have received money from the Papists, to act their affairs and promote their interest. And although this be such a putid calumny, such

a malicious falsehood, such a frontless lie, as impudence itself would blush at being made an instrument to vent it, and withal extremely ridiculous; yet because it seems useful unto the good end of uniting Protestants, and opposing popery, it hath not only been reported by sundry of the clergy, but embraced and divulged also by some of their weak and credulous followers, who seem to believe that other men's advantage is their religion. But when the utmost bounds of modesty are passed, nothing but an outrage in lying and calumny, out of hopes that something will stick at last, can give countenance to men in such false accusations. And those by whom they are first whispered, probably understand better than the nonconformists what influence money, or the things which they know how to turn into it, hath into their profession and actings in religion. It seems to me that some such men are afraid, lest the present opposition unto popery should issue in such an establishment of the Protestant religion, as that hereafter it should not be in the disposal of any, nor in their power to make a bargain of it, either for their advantage or in their necessity. For unless we should suppose such a defect in common prudence, as is not chargeable on men of understanding in other affairs, it is hard to judge that these things can proceed from any other ground, but a design to increase distrusts and jealousies amongst Protestants, to heighten their differences, to exasperate and provoke them to animosities, to weaken the hands of each party by a disbelief of the sincerity of each other in the same common cause; whence, whether it be designed or no, it will follow that we shall be all made a prey unto our restless adversaries. For what else but a strong inclination thereto can give the least credit or reputation to such vile insinuations, false surmises and fables (I do not say in the preface, but in

the reports that have been occasioned thereby), wherein folly and malice rival one another, against that plain, open, uncontrollable evidence, which the nonconformists always gave, and yet continue to give, of their faithful cordial adherence unto the Protestant religion and interest in the nation. And what now, if in way of retaliation a charge should be laid and managed against those of the episcopal way, that they should contribute their assistance, whether knowingly, or being deluded (it is all one), to the introduction of popery; would not all things be cast into an admirable posture amongst us, for an opposition thereunto? But let none mistake nor deceive themselves, neither the past sufferings of the nonconformists, nor their present hopes of liberty, nor the reproaches cast upon them, shall shake them in their resolutions for a conjunction with all sincere Protestants, in the preservation of their religion, and opposition unto all popish designs whatever. And (to speak with modesty enough) as they have hitherto in all instances of zeal and duty for the preservation of the Protestant religion, been as ready and forward as any other sort of men, so whatever may befall them, however they may be traduced, or falsely accused, they do and will continue in giving the highest security, that conscience, profession, principles, interest, and actions can give, of their stability in the same cause. Only they desire to be excused, if they make not use of this notable engine for opposing of popery, namely, the stirring up, at this present time, of jealousies, fears, and animosities amongst Protestants, which others judge serviceable unto that end. But that which animates all these insinuations, charges, and reports, is our thankful acceptance of the indulgence granted by his majesty by a public declaration some years ago; whereby it should seem the Papists thought to make some advantage, though they

were deceived in their expectation. I must needs say, that whatever be the true case in reference thereto in point of law, that in my judgment it scarcely answereth that loyalty and regard unto his majesty's honour, which some men profess, when all his actions are suited to their interests, to continue such outcries about that which was his own sole act, by the advice of his council. We did indeed thankfully accept and make use of this royal favour; and after that for so many years we had been exposed to all manner of sufferings and penalties, whereby multitudes were ruined in their estates, and some lost their lives, and that without hopes of any remission of severity from the parliament that then sat, by their mistake of the true interest of the kingdom, wherein alone they did not miss it, we were glad to take a little breathing space from our troubles, under his majesty's royal protection, designed only as an expedient (as was usual in former times) for the peace and prosperity of the kingdom, until the whole matter might be settled in parliament. And if this were a crime, 'habetis confitentem reum' as to my part. But because I know myself herein peculiarly reflected on, I do avow, that never any one person in authority, dignity, or power in the nation, nor any one that had any relation unto public affairs, nor any from them, Papist or Protestant, did once speak one word to me, or advise with me, about any indulgence or toleration to be granted unto Papists; I challenge all the world who are otherwise minded, to intermit their service for a season unto the great false accuser, and prove the contrary if they can. The persons are sufficiently known of whom they may make their inquiry.

But I can cast this also into the same heap or bundle of other false surmises and reports concerning me, almost without number; which it would be a wonder

that some men should pretend to believe and divulge as they have done, if we were bound to judge that their charity and prudence were proportionable unto their dignities and promotions. These things must be, whilst interest, with hopes and fears, vain love, and hatred thence arising, do steer the minds of men.

But what if we have not designed the prevalence or introduction of popery, yet being a company of silly fellows, we have suffered ourselves to be wheedled by the Jesuits, to be active for the cutting of our own throats; for we are full well satisfied, that we should be the very first who should drink of the cup of their fury, could they ruin the Protestant interest in England. And into such an unhappy posture of affairs are we fallen, that whereas it is evident we do nothing for the promotion of popery, but only pray against it, preach against it, write against it, instruct the people in principles of truth whereon to avoid it; and cordially join with all true Protestants in the opposition of it, wherein we are charged with an excess that is like to spoil all; yet these crafty blades know how to turn it all unto their advantage. As it should seem, therefore, there remains nothing for nonconformists to do in this matter, but to bind themselves hand and foot, and give themselves up unto the power of the Papists; for all they do against them, doth but promote their interest. But this I am persuaded they will be greatly unwilling unto, unless they are well assured, that their episcopal friends will be more ready to expose themselves to hazard for their preservation and deliverance, than yet they have reason to expect that they will. But for my part I was a long time since taught an expedient by an eminent personage for the freeing myself from any inclination to a compliance with popery, and that in the instance of himself. For

being in Ireland when there was, in former days, a great noise about reconciliation; a person of his own order and degree in the court of England, wrote unto him to inform him of a report, that he was inclined to a reconciliation with popery, or a compliance on good terms with the church of Rome; and withal desired him, that, if it were so, he would communicate unto him the reason of his judgment. But that great and wise personage, understanding full well whereunto these things tended, returned no answer, but this only: That he knew no reason for any such report; for he was sure, that he believed the pope to be antichrist; which put an absolute period unto the intercourse. And I can insist on the same defensative, against forty such arguments as are used to prove us compliant with the papal interest; and so I believe can all the nonconformists. And if this be not enough I can, for my part, subscribe unto the conclusion which that most eminent champion of the Protestant religion in England, namely, Whitaker, gives unto his learned disputation about antichrist; 'Igitur,' saith he, 'sequamur præeuntem Spiritum Sanctum, et libere dicamus, defendamus, clamemus, et per eum qui vivit in æternum juremus, pontificem Romanum esse antichristum.'

If this will not suffice, we know better how to spend our remaining hours of life and peace, than in contending about impertinent stories and surmises, exhaled by wit and invention out of the bog of secular interest. And shall therefore only assure those by whom we are charged, in the pulpit, or coffee-houses, or from the press, to countenance the promotion of the papal interest in the nation, that as they deal unjustly with us herein, and weaken the Protestant interest what lies in them; so let them and others do and say what they please, nothing shall ever shake us in

our resolution, by the help of God, to abide in a firm conjunction with all sincere Protestants for the preservation of our religion, and in opposition to the Papists; yea, that we would do so with our lives at the stake, if there were none left to abide in the same testimony but ourselves; but if they think that there is no way for us to be serviceable against popery, but by debauching our consciences with that conformity which they prescribe unto us, we beg their pardon, we are of another mind.

THE PREFACE.

An examination of the general principles of Dr. Stillingfleet's book of the Unreasonableness of Separation.

THE differences and contests among professed Christians about the nature, power, order, rule, and residence of the gospel church-state, with the interest of each dissenting party therein, have not only been great, and of long continuance, but have also so despised all ways and means of allaying or abatement, that they seem to be more and more inflamed every day; and to threaten more pernicious consequents, than any they have already produced; which yet have been of the worst of evils that the world for some ages hath groaned under. For the communion so much talked of amongst churches, is almost come only unto an agreement and oneness in design for the mutual and forcible extermination of one another; at least this is the professed principle of them who lay the loudest claim to the name and title, with all the rights and privileges, of the church. Nor are others far remote from the same design, who adjudge all who dissent from themselves into such a condition, as wherein they are much inclined to think it meet they should be destroyed. That which animates this contest, which gives it life and fierceness, is a supposed enclosure of certain privileges and advantages, spiritual and temporal, real or pretended, unto the church-state contended about. Hence most men seem to think that the principal, if not their only concernment in religion, is of what church they are; so as that a dissent from them is so evil, as that there is almost nothing else that hath any very considerable evil in it. When this is once well riveted in their minds by them whose secular advantages lie in the enclosure, they are in a readiness to bear a share in all the evils that unavoidably ensue on such divisions. By this means, among others, is the state or condition of Christian religion, as unto its public profession, become at this day so deplorable, as

cannot well be expressed. What with the bloody and desolating wars of princes and potentates, and what with the degeneracy of the community of the people from the rule of the gospel in love, meekness, self-denial, holiness, zeal, the universal mortification of sin, and fruitfulness in good works, the profession of Christianity is become but a sad representation of the virtues of him who calls out of darkness into his marvellous light. Neither doth there seem at present to be any design or expectation in the most for the ending of controversies about the church, but force and the sword; which God forbid.

It is therefore high time that a sober inquiry be made, whether there be any such church-state of divine institution as those contended about. For if it should appear upon trial, that indeed there is not, but that all the fierce digladiations of the parties at variance, with the doleful effects that attend them, have proceeded on a false supposition, in an adherence whereunto they are confirmed by their interests, some advances may be made towards their aba t-ment. However, if this may not be attained, yet directions may be taken from the discovery of the truth, for the use of them who are willing to be delivered from all concernment in these fruitless endless contests, and to reduce their whole practice in religion unto the institutions, rules, and commands of our Lord Jesus Christ. And where all hopes of a general reformation seem to fail, it savours somewhat of an unwarrantable severity, to forbid them to reform themselves who are willing so to do; provided they admit of no other rule in what they so do, but the declaration of the mind of Christ in the gospel, carrying it peaceably towards all men, and firmly adhering unto the faith once delivered unto the saints.

To make an entrance into this inquiry, the ensuing discourse is designed. And there can be no way of the management of it, but by a diligent impartial search into the nature, order, power, and rule of the gospel church-state, as instituted, determined and limited by our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles. When we depart from this rule, so as not to be regulated by it in all instances of fact, or pleas of right that afterward fell out, we fall into the confusion of various presumptions, suited unto the apprehensions and

interests of men, imposed on them from the circumstances of the ages wherein they lived. Yet is it not to be denied, but that much light into the nature of apostolical institutions may be received from the declared principles and practices of the first churches for the space of two hundred years, or thereabouts. But that after this the churches did insensibly depart in various degrees from the state, rule, and order of the apostolical churches, must I suppose be acknowledged by all those who groan under the final issue of that gradual degeneracy in the papal antichristian tyranny. For Rome was not built in a day, nor was this change introduced at once, or in one age; nor were the lesser alterations which began this declension, so prejudicial unto the being, order, and purity of the churches, as they proved afterward, through a continual additional increase in succeeding ages.

Having affirmed something of this nature in my brief vindication of the nonconformists from the guilt of schism, the reverend Dr. Stillingfleet in his late treatise, entitled, The Unreasonableness of Separation, doth not only deny it, but reflects with some severity upon the mention of it; part. ii. sect. 3. pp. 225, 226, &c. I shall therefore on this occasion reassume the consideration of it, although it will be spoken unto also afterward.

The words he opposeth are these: 'It is possible that an impartial account may, ere long, be given of the state and ways of the first churches, after the decease of the apostles, wherein it will be made to appear how they did insensibly deviate in many things from the rule of their first institution; so as that though their mistakes were of small moment, and not prejudicial unto their faith and order, yet occasion was administered unto succeeding ages to increase those deviations, until they issued in a fatal apostacy.' I yet suppose these words inoffensive, and agreeable unto the sentiments of the generality of Protestants. For,

1. Unto the first churches after the apostles, I ascribe nothing but such small mistakes as did no way prejudice their faith or order. And that they did preserve the latter as well as the former, as unto all the substantial parts of it, shall be afterward declared. Nor do I reflect any more upon them, than did Hegesippus in Eusebius, who confines

the virgin purity of the church unto the days of the apostles; lib. 3. cap. 29. The greater deviations which I intend, began not until after the end of the second century. But,

2. To evince the improbability of any alteration in church rule and order, upon my own principles, he intimates both here and afterward, that 'my judgment is that the government of the church was democratical, and the power of it in the people in distinction from its officers;' which is a great mistake; I never thought, I never wrote, any such thing. I do believe that the authoritative rule or government of the church was, is, and ought to be, in the elders and rulers of it, being an act of the office-power committed unto them by Christ himself. Howbeit my judgment is, that they ought not to rule the church with force, tyranny, and corporal penalties, or without their own consent, whereof we shall treat afterward. There are also other mistakes in the same discourse, which I shall not insist upon.

3. This therefore is that which he opposeth, namely, that there was a deviation in various degrees, and falling off from the original institution, order, and rule of the church, until it issued in a fatal apostacy. This is that which on the present occasion must be farther spoken unto. For if this be not true, I confess there is an end of this contest, and we must all acquiesce in the state, rule, and order, that was in the church of Rome before the reformation. But we may observe something yet farther in the vindication and confirmation of this truth, which I acknowledge to be the foundation of all that we plead for in point of church reformation. As,

1. That the reasons and arguings of the doctor in this matter, the necessity of his cause compelling him thereunto, are the same with those of the Papists about the apostacy of their church, in faith, order, and worship, wherewith they are charged; namely, when, where, how was this alteration made? who made opposition unto it? and the like. When these inquiries are multiplied by the Papists, as unto the whole causes between them and us, he knows well enough how to give satisfactory answers unto them, and so might do in this particular unto himself also; but I shall endeavour to ease him of that trouble at present. Only I

must say that it is fallen out somewhat unexpectedly, that the ruins of the principal bulwark of the papacy, which hath been effectually demolished by the writings of Protestants of all sorts, should be endeavoured to be repaired by a person, justly made eminent by his defence of the Protestant religion against those of the church of Rome.

2. But it may be pleaded, that although the churches following the first ages did insensibly degenerate from the purity and simplicity of gospel faith and worship, yet they neither did nor could do so from an adherence unto, and abiding in, their original constitution; or from the due observation of church-order, rule, and discipline, least of all could this happen in the case of diocesan episcopacy. I answer,

1. That as unto the original of any thing that looks like diocesan episcopacy, or the pastoral relation of one person of a distinct order from presbyters unto many particular complete churches with officers of their own, with power and jurisdiction in them and over them, unto the abridgment of the exercise of that right and power unto their own edification, which every true church is intrusted withal by Jesus Christ, it is very uncertain, and was introduced by insensible degrees, according unto the effectual working of the mystery of iniquity. Some say that there were two distinct orders, namely, those of bishops and presbyters, instituted at first in all churches planted by the apostles; but as the contrary may be evidently proved, so a supposition of it would no way promote the cause of diocesan episcopacy, until those who plead for it have demonstrated the stateof the churches wherein they were placed to be of the same nature with those now called diocesan. Wherefore this hypothesis begins generally to be deserted, as it seems to be by this author. Others suppose that immediately upon, or at, or after the decease of the apostles, this new order of bishops was appointed to succeed the apostles in the government of the churches that were then gathered or planted. But how, when, or by whom, by what authority, apostolical and divine, or ecclesiastical only and human, none can declare; seeing there is not the least footstep of any such thing either in the Scripture or in the records that remain of the primitive churches. Others

think this new order of officers took its occasional rise from the practice of the presbyters of the church at Alexandria, who chose out one among themselves constantly to preside in the rule of the church, and in all matters of order, unto whom they ascribed some kind of pre-eminence and dignity, peculiarly appropriating unto him the name of bishop. And if this be true as unto matter of fact, I reckon it unto the beginnings of those less harmful deviations from their original constitution, which I assigned unto primitive churches; but many additions must be made hereunto, before it will help the cause of diocesan episcopacy. What other occasions hereof were given or taken, what advantages were made use of to promote this alteration, shall be touched upon afterward.

2. Why may not the churches be supposed to have departed from their original constitution, order, and rule, as well as from their first faith and worship, which they did gradually in many successive ages, until both were utterly corrupted. The causes, occasions, and temptations leading unto the former, are to the full as pregnant as those leading unto the latter. For,

1. There was no vicious corrupt disposition of mind that began more early to work in church officers, nor did more grow and thrive in the minds of many, than ambition, with desire of pre-eminence, dignity, and rule. It is not to be supposed that Diotrephes was alone in his desire of pre-eminence, nor in the irregular actings of his unduly assumed authority. However we have one signal instance in him of the deviation that was in the church with him, from the rule of its original constitution. For he prevailed so far therein, as by his own single episcopal power to reject the authority of the apostles, and to cast them out of the church who complied not with his humour. How effectually the same ambition wrought afterward, in many others possessing the same place in their churches with Diotrephes, is sufficiently evident in all ecclesiastical histories. It is far from being the only instance of the corruption of church-order and rule, by the influence of this ambition, yet it is one that is pregnant, which is given us by Ambrose, for saith he, 'Ecclesia ut synagoga, seniores habuit, quorum sine consilio nihil agebatur in ecclesia; quod qua negli-

gentia obsoleverit nescio, nisi forte doctorum desidia, aut magis superbia, dum soli volunt aliquid videri.' In 1 ad Timoth. cap. 5. It seems there was some alteration in church-rule and order in his time, whose beginning and progress he could not well discover and trace, but knew well enough, that so it was then come to pass. And if he who lived so near the times wherein such alterations were made, could not yet discover their first insinuation, nor their subtle progress, it is unreasonable to exact a strict account of us in things of the same nature, who live so many ages after their first introduction. But this he judgeth, that it was the pride or ambition of the doctors of the church, which introduced that alteration in its order. Whereas, therefore, we see in the event, that all deviations from the original constitution of churches, all alterations in their rule and order, did issue in a compliance with the ambition of church-rulers, as it did in the papal church; and this ambition was signally noted as one of the first depraved inclinations of mind that wrought in ecclesiastical rulers, and which in the fourth and fifth centuries openly proclaimed itself unto the scandal of Christian religion, there was a greater disposition in them unto a deviation from the original institution, rule, and order of the church, no way suited unto the satisfaction of that ambition, than unto a defection from the purity of faith and worship, which yet also followed.

2. As the inclination of many lay towards such a deviation, so their interests lead them unto it, and their temptations cast them upon it. For to acknowledge the truth unto our author and others, the rule and conduct of the church, the preservation of its order and discipline according unto its first institution, and the directions given in the Scripture about it, are, according unto our apprehension of these things, a matter so weighty in itself, so dangerous as unto its issue, attended with so many difficulties, trials, and temptations, laid under such severe interdictions of lordly power, or seeking either of wealth or dignity, that no wise men will ever undertake it, but merely out of a sense of a call from Christ unto it, and in compliance with that duty which he owes unto him. It is no pleasant thing unto flesh and blood, to be engaged in the conduct and oversight of

Christ's volunteers, to bear with their manners, to exercise all patience towards them in their infirmities and temptations, to watch continually over their walkings and conversation, and thereon personally to exhort and admonish them all, to search diligently and scrupulously into the rule of the Scripture for their warranty in every act of their power and duty; under all their weaknesses and miscarriages, continuing a high valuation of them, as of the flock of God, 'which he hath purchased with his own blood,' with sundry other things of the like kind, all under an abiding sense of the near approach of that great account which they must give of the whole trust and charge committed unto them, before the judgment-seat of Christ; for the most part peculiarly exposed unto all manner of dangers, troubles, and persecutions, without the least encouragement from wealth, power, or honour. It is no wonder, therefore, if many in the primitive times were willing gradually to extricate themselves out of this uneasy condition, and to embrace all occasions and opportunities of introducing insensibly another rule and order into the churches, that might tend more unto the exaltation of their own power, authority, and dignity, and free them in some measure from the weight of that important charge, and continual care with labour, which a diligent and strict adherence unto the first institution of churches, and rules given for their order and government, in the Scripture, would have obliged them unto. And this was done accordingly; until, in the fourth and fifth centuries and so onward, the bishops, under various titles, began by their arbitrary rules and canons, to dispose of the flock of Christ, to part and divide them among themselves, without their own knowledge or consent, as if they had conquered them by the sword. This bishop shall have such a share and number of them under his power, and that other so many; so far shall the jurisdiction of one extend, and so far that of another, was the subject of many of their decrees and laws for the rule of the church. But yet neither did they long keep within those bounds and limits which their more modest ambition had at first prescribed unto them; but took occasion from these beginnings to contend among themselves about pre-eminence, dignity, and power, in which

the bishop of Rome at length remained master of the field, thereby obtaining a second conquest of the world.

3. That there was such a gradual deviation from the original institution of churches, their order and rule, is manifest in the event. For the change became at length as great as the distance is between the gospel and the rule of Christ over his church, on the one hand, and the canon law with the pope or antichrist set over the church, on the other. This change was not wrought at once, not in one age, but by an insensible progress even from the days of the apostles unto those dark and evil times wherein the popes of Rome were exalted into an absolute tyranny over all churches, unto the satiety of their ambition. For,

4. This mystery of iniquity began to work in the days of the apostles themselves, in the suggestions of Satan and the lusts of men, though in a manner latent and imperceptible unto the wisest and best of men. For that this mystery of the iniquity consisted in the effectual workings of the pride, ambition, and other vices, of the minds of men, excited, enticed, and guided by the craft of Satan, until it issued in the idolatrous persecuting state of the church of Rome, wherein all church-rule, order, and worship of divine institution was utterly destroyed or corrupted, we shall believe, until we see an answer given unto the learned writings of all sorts of Protestants whereby it hath been proved.

These things are sufficient to vindicate the truth of the assertion which the doctor opposeth, and to free it from his exceptions. But because, as was observed before, the supposition hereof is the foundation of all our present contests about church order and rule, I shall yet proceed a little farther in the declaration of the way and manner whereby the apostacy asserted was begun and carried on. And I shall not herein insist on particular instances, nor make a transcription of stories out of ancient writers, giving evidence unto the truth, because it hath been abundantly done by others, especially those of Magdeburg in the sixth and seventh chapters of their Centuries, unto whose observations many other learned men have made considerable additions; but I shall only treat in general of the causes, ways, and manner, of the beginning and progress of the apostacy or declension of churches from their first institution, which fell

out in the successive ages after the apostles, especially after the end of the second century, until when divine institutions, as unto the substance of them, were preserved entire.

Decays in any kind, even in things natural and political, are hardly discernible but in and by their effects. When an hectic distemper befalls the body of any man, it is ofttimes not to be discerned until it is impossible to be cured. The Roman historian gives this advice unto his readers; after he hath considered the ways and means whereby the empire came to its greatness; 'labente deinde disciplina velut dissidentes primo mores sequatur animo; deinde ut magis magisque lapsi sint, tum ire cæperint præcipites, donec ad hæc tempora, quibus nec vitia nostra, nec remedia pati possumus, periculum est.' Liv. Præfat. His words do not give us a more graphical description of the rise and decay, as unto virtue and vice, of the Roman empire, than of the Roman church, as unto its rise by holiness and devotion, and its ruin by sensuality, ambition, the utter neglect of the discipline of Christ, and superstition. But yet let any man peruse that historian who wrote with this express design, he shall hardly fix upon many of those instances whereby the empire came into that deplorable condition, wherein it was not able to bear its distempers nor its cure, such as was the state of the church before the reformation. But besides the common difficulty of discovering the beginnings and gradual progression of decays, declensions, and apostacy, those which we treat of were begun and carried on in a mysterious manner, that is, by the effectual working of the mystery of iniquity. As this almost hid totally the work of it from the ages wherein it was wrought, so it renders the discovery of it now accomplished, the more difficult. Passengers in a ship setting out to sea, ofttimes discern not the progressive motion of the ship; yea, for awhile the land rather seems to move from them, than the vessel wherein they are from it; but after a season the consideration of what distance they are at from their port, gives them sufficient assurance of the progress that hath been made. So this declension of the churches from their primitive order and institution, is discoverable, rather by measuring the distance between what it left, and what it arrived unto, than by express instances of it. But yet is it not altogether like unto that of a ship at

sea, but rather unto the way of a serpent on a rock, which leaves some slime in all its turnings and windings, whereby it may be traced. Such marks are left on record, of the serpentine works of this mystery of iniquity, as whereby it may be traced, with more or less evidence from its original interests unto its accomplishment.

The principal promoting causes of this defection on the part of men, were those assigned by St. Ambrose in one instance of it, namely, the negligence of the people, and the ambition of the clergy. I speak as unto the state, rule, discipline, and order of the church; for as unto the doctrine and worship of it, there were many other causes and means of their corruption, which belong not unto our present purpose. But as unto the alterations that were begun and carried on in the state, order, and rule of the church, they arose from those springs of negligence on the one hand, and ambition on the other, with want of skill and wisdom to manage outward occurrences and incidencies, or what alteration fell out in the outward state and condition of the church in this world. For hence it came to pass, that in the accession of the nations in general unto the profession of the gospel, church order was suited and framed unto their secular state, when they ought to have been brought into the spiritual state and order of the church, leaving their political state entire unto themselves. Herein, I say, did the guides of the church certainly miss their rule, and depart from it, in the days of Constantine the emperor, and afterward under other Christian emperors, when whole towns, cities, yea, and nations offered at once to join themselves unto it. Evident it is, that they were not wrought hereunto by the same power, nor induced unto it on the same motives, or led by the same means with those who formerly under persecution were converted unto the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this quickly manifested itself in the lives and conversations of many, yea, of the most of them. Hence those which were wise, quickly understood, that what the church had got in multitude and number, it had lost in the beauty and glory of its holy profession. Chrysostom in particular complains of it frequently, and in many places cries out, What have I to do with this multitude, a few serious believers are more worth than them all.

However, the guides of the church thought meet to receive them, with all their multitudes, into their communion, at least so far as to place them under the jurisdiction of such and such episcopal sees; for hereby their own power, authority, dignity, revenues, were enlarged and mightily increased. On this occasion, the ancient primitive way of admitting members into the church being relinquished, the consideration of their personal qualifications, and real conversion unto God, omitted, such multitudes being received as could not partake in all acts and duties of communion with those particular churches whereunto they were disposed, and being the most of them unfit to be ruled by the power and influence of the commands of Christ on their minds and consciences, it was impossible but that a great alteration must ensue in the state, order, and rule of the churches, and a great deviation from their original institution. Men may say that this alteration was necessary, that it was good and useful, that it was but the accommodation of general rules unto especial occasions and circumstances; but that there was an alteration hereon in all these things, none can with modesty deny. And this is enough unto my present design, being only to prove, that such alterations and deviations did of old fall out. Neither ought we to cover the provoking degeneracy of the generality of Christians, in the fourth and fifth centuries, with those that followed. The consideration of it is necessary unto the vindication of the holy providence of God, in the government of the world, and of the faithfulness of Christ in his dealing with his church. For there hath been no nation in the world which publicly received Christian religion, but it hath been wasted and destroyed by the sword of pagan idolaters, or such as are no better than they. At first all the provinces of the western empire were one after another made desolate by the pagan nations of the northern countries; who themselves did afterward so turn Christians, as to lay among them the foundation of antichristianism; Rev. xvii. 12, 13. The eastern empire, comprehending the residue of the provinces that had embraced the Christian religion, was first desolated in the chief branches of it, by the Saracens, and at length utterly destroyed by the Turks. And I pray God that the like fate doth not at this day hang

over the reformed nations, as from their profession they are called. Do we think that all this was without cause? Did God give up his inheritance to the spoil of barbarous infidels, without such provocations, as the passing by whereof was inconsistent with the holiness and righteousness of his rule? It was not the wisdom, nor the courage, nor the multitude of their enemies, but their own sins, wickedness, superstition, and apostacy from the rule of gospel order, worship, and obedience, which ruined all Christian nations.

But to give farther evidence hereunto, I shall consider the causes aforementioned distinctly and apart. And the first of them is the negligence of the people themselves. But in this negligence I comprise both the ignorance, sloth, worldliness, decay in gifts and graces, with superstition in sundry instances, that in many of them were the causes of it. Dr. Stillingfleet pleads that 'it is very unlikely that the people would forego their interest in the government of the churches, if ever they had any such thing, without great noise and trouble. For,' saith he, 'government is so nice and tender a thing, that every one is so much concerned for his share in it, that men are not easily induced to part with it. Let us suppose the judgment of the church to have been democratical at first, as Dr. Owen seems to do, is it probable that the people would have been wheedled out of the sweetness of government so soon, and made no noise about it?' p. 226. His mistake about my judgment herein hath been marked before. No other interest or share in the government is ascribed by us unto the people, but that they may be ruled by their own consent, and that they may be allowed to yield obedience in the church, unto the commands of Christ and his apostles, given unto them for that end. This interest they neither did nor could forego, without their own sin and guilt, in neglecting the exercise of the gifts and graces which they ought to have had, and the performance of the duties whereunto they were obliged. But for any engagement on their minds from the 'sweetness of government,' wherein their concern principally consists in an understanding voluntary obedience unto the commands of Christ, they had nothing of it. Take also, in general, government to be, as the government of the church is, merely a duty, labour, and service, without those advantages

of power, ease, dignity, and wealth, which have been annexed unto it; and it will be hard to discover such a nicety or sweetness in it, as to oblige unto pertinacy in an adherence unto it. If the government of the church were apprehended to consist in men's giving themselves wholly to the word and prayer, in watching continually over the flock; in accurate carefulness to do and act nothing in the church but in the name and authority of Christ, by the warranty of his commands, with a constant exercise of all gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit which they have received, in these and all other duties of their office, and that without the least appearance of domination, or the procuring of dignity, secular honours, and revenues thereby, it may be, a share and interest in it would not be so earnestly coveted and sought after, as at present it is. Nor is there any more pertinency in his ensuing supposal of a 'change in the government of the congregational churches in London, in setting up one man to rule over them all and to appoint their several teachers,' &c. p. 227. 'which could not be done without noise.' It is in vain to fear it,

Non isto vivimus illic
Quo tu rere, modo,

and impertinent in this case to suppose it. For it speaks of a sudden total alteration in the state, order, and rule of churches to be made at once; whereas our discourse is of that which was gradual in many ages by degrees almost imperceptible. But yet I can give no security that the churches of our way shall not, in process of time, decline from their primitive constitution and order, either in their power and spirit, in faith and love, or in the outward practice of them, unless they continually watch against all beginnings and occasions of such declensions, and frequently renew their reformation; or if it be otherwise, they will have better success than any churches in the world ever yet had, even those that were of the planting of the apostles themselves, as is manifested in the judgment that our Lord Jesus Christ passed on them, Rev. ii. and iii. The negligence of the people which issued in their unfitness to be disposed of and ruled according to the principles of the first constitution of church-order, may be considered either as it gave occasion unto those lesser deviations from the rule, which did not much preju-

dice the faith and order of the churches, or as it occasioned greater alterations in the ensuing ages. And,

1. The great, and perhaps in some things excessive, veneration which they had of their bishops or pastors, did probably occasion in them some neglect of their own duty. For they were easily induced hereon, not only implicitly to leave the management of all church affairs unto them, but also zealously to comply with their mistakes. The church of Smyrna, giving an account of the martyrdom of holy Polycarpus, tells us, that when he ascended the pile wherein he was to be burned, 'that he pulled off his own clothes, and endeavoured to pull off his shoes, which he had not done before, because the faithful strove among themselves who should soonest touch his body;' Euseb. lib. 4. cap. 15. I think there can be no veneration due to a man, which was not so unto that great and holy person. But those who did so express it, might easily be induced to place too much of their religion in an implicit compliance with them unto whom they are so devoted. Hence a negligence in themselves as unto their particular duties did ensue. They were quickly far from esteeming it their duty to say unto their pastor or bishop, that he 'should take heed unto the ministry which he had received in the Lord to fulfil it,' as the apostle enjoins the Colossians to say to Archippus their pastor; chap. iv. 17. but began to think that the glory of obsequious obedience was all that was left unto them. And hence did some of the clergy begin to assume to themselves, and to ascribe unto one another, great swelling titles of honour, and names of dignity (amongst which the blasphemous title of his holiness was at length appropriated unto the bishop of Rome), wherein they openly departed from apostolical simplicity and gravity. But these things fell out after the writing of the Epistle of Clemens, of those of the church of Vienna, and Smyrna, wherein no such titles do appear.

2. Many of the particular churches of the first plantations increasing greatly in the number of their members, it was neither convenient nor safe that the whole multitude should on all occasions come together, as they did at first, to consult about their common concerns, and discharge the duties of their communion. For by reason of danger from

their numerous conventions, they met in several parcels, as they had opportunity. Herewith they were contented, unless it were upon the greater occasions of choosing their officers and the like, whereon the whole church met together. This made them leave the ordinary administration of all things in the church unto the elders of it, not concerning themselves farther therein, but still continuing members of the same particular church. It is altogether improbable what Platina from Damasus affirms in the life of Evaristus, about the end of the first century, that he distributed the faithful at Rome into distinct titles or parishes, with distinct presbyters of their own. For it is apparent that in those days wherein persecution was at its height, that the meetings of believers were occasional, with respect unto their security, ofttimes by night, sometimes in caves under the earth, or in deserted burial-places, at best in private houses. And they had for what they did the example of the apostolical churches; Acts, i. 13, 14. ii. 46. iv. 24, 31. xii. 12. xviii. 7. xx. 8. xxi. 18. Instances of such meetings may be multiplied, especially in the church of Rome. And to manifest that they took this course upon necessity, when peace began to be restored at any time unto them, they designed temples that might receive the whole multitude of the church together. The distribution mentioned into titles and parishes, began a long time after, and in very few places within three hundred years. In this state, it is easy to conceive what alterations might fall out in some churches from their primitive order, especially how the people might desert their diligence and duty in attending unto all the concerns of the church. And if those things which the apostles wrote unto them in their epistles, the instructions, directions, and commands how in all things they should act and deport themselves in the church, be esteemed to be obligatory in all ages, I cannot see how after the second century they were much complied withal, unless it were in the single instance of choosing their own officers or rulers.

But, secondly, After these there ensued greater occasions of greater variations from the primitive institution and order of the churches, on the part of the people. For,

1. Such numbers of them were received into a relation unto particular churches, as was inconsistent with the ends

of their institution, and the observance of the communion required in them, as will afterward appear. And the reliefs that were invented for this inconveniency in distinct conventions, supplied with the administration of the word and sacrament from the first church, or by stated titles, did alter the state of the church.

Among those multitudes which were added unto the churches, especially in the fourth century, many, if not the most, did come short inexpressibly in knowledge, gifts, grace, holiness, and uprightness of conversation, of the primitive Christians, as the writers of that age complain. And being hereby incapable of walking according unto the order, rule, and discipline of the apostolical churches, there seemed to be a necessity of another rule, of other ways and means, for their government, without their own concurrence or consent, than what was at first appointed, which were gradually introduced; whence the original of a multitude of those canons, which were arbitrarily invented afterward for their rule and government, is to be derived. And it may be made to appear, that the accommodation of the rule, yea, and of the worship of the church in the several ages of it, unto the ignorance, manners, and inclinations of the people, who were then easily won unto the outward profession of Christian religion, was one means of the ruin of them both, until they issued in downright tyranny and idolatry.

But much more of the cause of the deviation of the churches from their primitive rule and order, is to be ascribed unto the ambition and love of pre-eminence in many of the clergy, or rulers of the churches; but this is no place nor season to manifest this by instances, besides it hath been done by others. I shall therefore inquire only into one or two things in particular, which are of principal consideration in the declension of the churches from their primitive institution, order, and rule. And,

1. It is evident, that there was an alteration made in the state of the church as to its officers. For it issued at last in popes, patriarchs, cardinals, metropolitan and diocesan bishops, who were utterly foreign unto the state and order of the primitive churches, and that for some ages. Nor were these officers introduced into the church at once, or in one age, nor with the powers which they afterward claimed and

assumed unto themselves. It was done gradually in many succeeding ages, working by a design to accommodate the state of the church unto the political state of the empire in the distribution of its government.

2. The beginnings of this great alteration were small, nor at all perceived in the days wherein they were first acted. Nor is it agreed, nor as far as I see, will it ever be agreed, among learned men, when first a disparity among the ordinary officers of the church, in order, degree, or power, did first begin, nor by what means it was brought about. The apostles were all equal among themselves, no one had either office or office-power above others. So were all the ordinary bishops and presbyters mentioned in the Scripture, as shall be proved afterward; no intimation is given of any pre-eminence or superiority amongst them, of one over others. Yet afterward in the third and fourth centuries, much of that nature appears. It begins to be granted that the bishops and elders mentioned in the Scripture were the same, and that there was no difference in name, office, or power, during the apostles' times, which was the judgment of Jerome, and our author seems to me to be of the same mind; p. 267. But they say, that after the decease of the apostles, there were some appointed to succeed them in that part of their office, which concerned the rule of many churches. And this they say was done for the prevention of schism, but with ill success; for, as Clemens affirms, that the apostles foresaw that there would be strife and contention about episcopacy, even when it was confined unto its original order, because of the ambition of Diotrephes and others like him; so it became much more the cause of all sorts of disorders in schisms and heresies, when it began to exalt itself in dignity and reputation. The first express attempt to corrupt and divide a church, made from within itself, was that in the church of Jerusalem, made by Thebulis, because Simon Cleopas was chosen bishop, and he was refused; Euseb. lib. 4. cap. 21. The same rise had the schisms of the Novatians and Donatists, the heresies of Arius and others. Neither is there any thing certain in this pretended succession of some persons unto the apostles in that part of their office which concerns the rule of many churches by one overseer. No intimation of any such appointment by the apostles, or any of them, no

record of the concurrence of the churches themselves, in and unto this alteration, can be produced. Nor is there any analogy between the extraordinary power of every apostle over all churches, and care for them, and the ordinary power of a bishop over a small number, which lot or accident disposeth unto him. Besides, it cannot be proved, no instance can be given, or hath been for the space of two hundred years or until the end of the second century, of any one person who had the care of more churches than one committed unto him, or did take the charge of them on himself. But whereas this change did fall out, and appears evidently so to have done in the fourth century, we may briefly inquire into the causes and occasions of it.

Churches were originally planted in cities and towns for the most part; not absolutely; for the word was preached and churches gathered by the apostles κατὰ πόλεις καὶ χώρας, as Clemens testifieth. In such cities there was but one church, whereunto all believers did belong. I mention this the rather, because our present author, who is pleased frequently to mistake my words and principles, affirms 'that the thing which I should have proved, is, that there were more churches at first planted in one city than one.' I know not why I should be obliged to do so, because I never said so. I do believe indeed that there may be more particular churches than one, in one city; and that sometimes it is better that it should be so, than that all believers in the same city should be kept up unto one congregation to the obstruction of their edification. But that there were originally, or in the days of the apostles, more churches than one, in any one city or town, I do wholly deny; though I grant at the same time there were churches in villages also, as will appear afterward. But though there was one church only in one town or city, yet all the believers that belonged unto that church, did not live in that city, but sundry of them in the fields and villages about. So Justin Martyr tells us, that on the first day of the week, when the church had its solemn assemblies, all the members of it in the city and out of the country the fields and villages about, met together in the same place. In process of time these believers in the country did greatly increase, by the means of the ministry of the city church, which diligently attended unto the conversion of all sorts of men, with some extraordi-

nary helps besides. But hereon the example of the apostles was overseen. For on this account of the conversion of many unto the faith, in the towns and villages of any province, they erected and planted new churches among them, not obliging them all unto that first church, from whence the word went forth for their conversion. But those who succeeded them, being hindered by many reasons which may be easily recounted, from thoughts of the multiplication of churches, chose rather to give the believers scattered up and down in the country, occasional assistance by presbyters of their own, than to dispose them into a church-state and order. But after awhile their number greatly increasing, they were necessitated to supply them with a constant ministry in several parcels or divisions. The ministers or elders thus disposed amongst them for their edification in the administration of the ordinances of the gospel, did still relate unto and depend upon that city first church, from whence they came. But the numbers of believers daily increasing, and a succession of presbyters in their distinct assemblies being found necessary, they came to be called churches, though continuing in dependance, both for a supply of officers and for rule, on the first or city church, whereunto they esteemed themselves to belong. This was the way and manner of the multiplication of Christian assemblies throughout the Roman empire. And hereby all the bishops of the first churches became by common consent to have a distinction from and pre-eminence above the presbyters that were fixed in the country, and a rule over those assemblies or churches themselves. And therefore when they met together in the council of Nice, among the first things they decreed, one was, to confirm unto the bishops of the great cities, that power over the neighbouring churches which they had enjoined from this occasional rise and constitution of them. Hereby was a difference and distinction between bishops and presbyters, between mother and dependant churches, introduced, equally almost in all places, without taking any notice of the departure which was therein from the primitive pattern and institution. But these things fell out long after the days of the apostles; namely, in the third and fourth centuries, there being no mention of them before.

But secondly, There was another occasion of this altera-

tion which took place before that insisted on. For in many of those city churches, especially when the number of believers much increased, there were many bishops or elders who had the rule of them in common. This is plain in the Scripture, and in the ensuing records of church affairs. And they had all the same office, the same power, and were of the same order. But after awhile, to preserve order and decency among themselves, and in all their proceedings, they chose one from among them, who should preside in all church affairs for order's sake, unto whom, after a season, the name of bishop began to be appropriated. Whether the rule they proceeded by herein, was to choose them unto this dignity who had been first converted unto the faith, or first called and ordained to be presbyters, or had respect unto the gifts and graces of those whom they chose, is not certain. But this way began in those churches, wherein some extraordinary officer, apostle, or evangelist had long resided. It cannot, therefore, be doubted but they had some design to represent hereby somewhat of the dignity of such an officer, and a resemblance of the continuance of his presence among them; and this I suppose fell out early in the churches, though without ground or warrant. And the principal pastors of other churches, which had not any great number of elders in them, yet quickly assumed unto themselves the dignity which the others had attained.

Justin Martyr, in the account he gives of the church, its order, rule, worship, and discipline in his days, mentions one singular person in one church, whom he calls Προέστως, who presided in all the affairs of the church, and himself administered all the sacred ordinances every Lord's day, unto the whole body of the church gathered and met, out of the city and the villages about. This was the bishop; and if any one desired this office, he desired a good work, as the apostle speaks. Whatever accessions were made unto the church, these Πρώτοστῶτες, which were either the first converted to the faith, or the first ordained presbyters, or obtained their pre-eminence, 'non pretio, sed testimonia,' as Tertullian speaks, upon the account of their eminency in gifts and holiness, were yet quickly sensible of their own dignity and prælation, and by all means sought the enlargement of it,

supposing that it belonged unto the honour and order of the church itself.

Under this state of things, the churches increasing every day in number and wealth, growing insensibly more and more (indies magis magisque decrescente disciplina) into a form and state exceeding the bounds of their original institution, and becoming unwieldy as unto the pursuit of their ends unto mutual edification, it is not hard to conjecture how a stated distinction between bishops and presbyters did afterward ensue. For as the first elder, bishop, or pastor, had obtained this small pre-eminence in the church wherein he did preside, and the assemblies of the villages about, so the management of those affairs of the church, which they had in communion with others, was committed unto him, or assumed by him. This gave them the advantage of meeting in synods and councils afterward, wherein they did their own business unto the purpose. Hereon in a short time the people were deprived of all their interest in the state of the church, so as to be governed by their own consent, which indeed they also had rendered themselves unmeet to enjoy and exercise; other elders were deprived of that power and authority which is committed unto them by Christ; and thrust down into an order or degree inferior unto that wherein they were originally placed; new officers in the rule of the church, utterly unknown to the Scripture and primitive antiquity, were introduced; all charitable donations unto the church, for the maintenance of the ministry, the poor, and the redemption of captives, were for the most part abused, to advance the revenues of the bishops; such secular advantages in honour, dignity, and wealth were annexed unto episcopal sees, as that ambitious men shamefully contested for the attaining of them, which in the instance of the bloody conflict between the parties of Damasus and Ursacius at Rome, Ammianus Marcellinus, a heathen, doth greatly and wisely reflect upon. But yet all these evils were as nothing in comparison of that dead sea of the Roman tyranny and idolatry, whereinto at last these bitter waters ran, and were therein totally corrupted.

I thought also to have proceeded with an account of the declension of the churches from their first institution, in

their matter, form, and rule. But because this would draw forth my discourse beyond my present intention, I shall forbear, having sufficiently vindicated my assertion in this one instance.

It is no part of my design to give an answer at large unto the great volume that Dr. Still hath written on this occasion; much less to contend about particular sayings, opinions, the practices of this or that man, which it is filled withal. But whereas his treatise, so far as the merit of the cause is concerned in it, doth consist of two parts, the first whereof contains such stories, things, and sayings, as may load the cause and persons whom he opposeth with prejudices in the minds of others, in which endeavour he exceeds all expectation; and what doth more directly concern the argument in hand; I shall at the end of the ensuing discourse speak distinctly unto all that is material of the second sort, especially so far as is needful, unto the defence of my former Vindication of the Nonconformists from the Guilt of Schism.

For the things of the first sort, wherein the doctor doth so abound both in his preface and in the first part of his book, as to manifest himself, I fear, to be a little too sensible of provocation (for the actings of interest in wise men are usually more sedate), I shall only oppose some general considerations unto them, without arguing or contending about particulars, which would be endless and useless. And whereas he hath gathered up almost every thing that hath been done, written, or spoken, to the prejudice of the cause and persons whom he opposeth (though frequently charged before), adding the advantage of his style and method unto their reinforcement; I shall reduce the whole unto a few heads which seem to be of the greatest importance.

I shall leave him without disturbance unto the satisfaction he hath in his own love, moderation, and condescension, expressed in his preface. Others may possibly call some things in it unto a farther account. But the first part of his book is cast under two heads.

1. A commendation of the first reformers and their reformation, with some reflections upon all that acquiesce not therein, as though they esteemed themselves wiser and better than they. From this topic proceed many severe re-

flections and some reproaches. The other consists in a story of the rise and progress of separation from the church of England, with great miscarriages among them who first attempted it, and the opposition made unto them by those who were themselves nonconformists. The whole is closed with the difference and debate between the divines of the assembly of the Presbyterian way, and the dissenting brethren, as they were then called. Concerning these things the discourse is so prolix, and so swelled with long quotations, that I scarce believe any man would have the patience to read over a particular examination of it; especially considering how little the cause in hand is concerned in the whole story, whether it be told right or wrong, candidly or with a design to make an advantage unto the prejudice of others. I shall therefore only mark something with respect unto both these heads of the first part of the book, which if I mistake not will lay it aside from being of any use to our present cause.

1. As unto the first reformers and reformation in the days of king Edward, the plea from them and it, which we have been long accustomed unto, is, that they were persons great, wise, learned, holy; that some of them died martyrs; that the work of the reformation was greatly owned and blessed of God; and therefore our non-acquiescency therein, but desiring a farther reformation of the church than what they saw and judged necessary, is unreasonable, and that what we endeavour therein, though never so peaceably, is schismatical. But,

1. None do more bless God for the first reformers, and the work they did, than we do; none have a higher esteem of their persons, abilities, graces, and sufferings, than we have; none cleave more firmly to their doctrine, which was the life and soul of the reformation, than we; nor desire more to follow them in their godly design. They are not of us who have declared that the death of king Edward was a happiness or no unhappiness to the church of England, nor who have reflected on the reformation as needless, and given assurance, that if it had not been undertaken, salvation might have been obtained safely enough in the church of Rome; nor were they of us who have questioned the zeal and prudence of the martyrs in those days of suffering. We have

other thoughts concerning them, another kind of remembrance of them.

2. The titles assigned unto them of wise, learned, holy, zealous, are fully answered by that reformation of the church in its doctrine and worship which God wrought by their ministry, so that none without the highest ingratitude can derogate any thing from them in these things. But it is no disparagement unto any of the sons of men, any officers of the church since the days of the apostles, first reformers, or those that followed them, to judge that they were not infallible, that their work was not absolutely perfect like the work of God, whereunto nothing can be added nor aught taken away. Wherefore,

3. We are not obliged to make what they did, and what they attained unto, and what they judged meet as unto the government and worship of the church, to be our absolute rule, from which it should be our sin to dissent or depart. They never desired nor designed that it should be so; for to do so, would have been to have cast out one papacy, and to have brought in another. And the arguments of the Papists for their absolute adherence unto the men of their veneration, those who have been formerly of great reputation in their church, for learning, holiness, and devotion, are as forcible unto them, as any can be unto us for an adherence unto the first reformers in all things; but yet are they not excused in their errors thereby. Had we received a command from heaven to hear them in all things, it had altered the case, but this we have received only with respect unto Jesus Christ, and shall therefore in these things ultimately attend only unto what he speaks. And we have sundry considerations which confirm us in the use and exercise of that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, to inquire ourselves into our duty in these things, and to regulate our duty in them by his word, notwithstanding what was done by our first reformers. For,

1. They did not think themselves obliged, they did not think meet to abide within the bounds and limits of that reformation of the church, which had been attempted before them, by men wise, learned, and holy, even in this nation. Such was that which was endeavoured by Wickliff and his followers, in giving testimony whereunto many suffered mar-

tyrdom, and prepared the way unto those that were to come after. They approved of what was then done or attempted to be done for the substance of it; yet esteemed themselves at liberty to make a farther progress in the same work, which they did accordingly. Surely such persons never designed their own judgment and practice to give boundaries unto all reformation for evermore; or pretended that they had made so perfect a discovery of the mind of Christ in all things belonging unto the rule and worship of the church, as that it should not only be vain, but sinful to make any farther inquiries about it. Some thought they were come unto the utmost limits of navigation, and discovery of the parts of the world, before the West Indies were found out. And some men when in any kind they know as much as they can, are apt to think there is no more to be known. It was not so with our reformers.

2. They did not at once make what they had done themselves to be a fixed rule in these things. For themselves made many alterations in the service-book which they first composed; and if they judged not their first endeavour to be satisfactory to themselves, they had no reason to expect their second should be a standing rule unto all future ages. Nor did they so, but frequently acknowledged the imperfection of what they had done.

3. The first reformers, both bishops and others, both those who underwent martyrdom at home, and those who lived in exile abroad, differed among themselves in their judgments and apprehensions about those things which are now under contest; whereas they perfectly agreed in all doctrines of faith and gospel obedience. The public records of these differences, do so remain as that they cannot modestly be denied, nor handsomely covered. And this must needs weaken the influence of their authority in the settlement of the church, which was an act only of the prevalent party among them.

4. They differed in these things from all other reformed churches, with whom they did absolutely agree in doctrine, and had the strictest communion in faith and love. For it is known that their doctrine which they owned and established, was the same with that of the churches abroad called particularly reformed, in distinction from the Lu-

therans. But as unto the state, rule, and order of the church, they differed from them all. I press not this consideration unto the disadvantage of what they attained unto and established in the way of reformation, or in a way of preferring other churches above them; but only to evidence that we have reason enough not to esteem ourselves absolutely obliged unto what they did and determined, as unto all endeavours after any farther reformation.

5. In their reformation they avowedly proposed a rule and measure unto themselves, which was both uncertain, and in many things apparently various from the original rule of these things given by Christ and his apostles, with the practice of the first churches. And this was the state and example of the church under the first Christian emperors; as our author confesseth. This rule is uncertain; for no man living is able to give a just and full account of what was the state and rule of all the churches in the world in the reign of any one emperor, much less during the succession of many of them, continual alterations in the state or order of the church following one upon another. And that in those days there was a prevalent deviation from the original rule of church-order, hath been before declared. We dare not therefore make them and what they did to be our rule absolutely, who missed it so much in the choice of their own.

6. We may add hereunto the consideration of the horrid darkness which they newly were delivered from, the close adherence of some traditional prejudices unto the best of men in such a condition, the difficulties and oppositions they met withal as unto their whole work; their prudence, as they judged it, in an endeavour to accommodate all things unto the inclinations and desires of the body of the people (extremely immersed in their old traditions), which might not be destructive unto their salvation, in heresy or idolatry; all which could not but leave some marks of imperfection on their whole work of reformation.

Upon these and the like considerations it is, that we are enforced to assert the use of our own liberty, light, and understanding, in the inquiring after and compliance with the true original state and order of evangelical churches, with our duty in reference thereunto, and not to be absolutely

confined unto what was judged meet and practised in these things by the first reformers. And the truth is, if present interest and advantage did not prevail with men to fix the bounds of all church reformation in what was by them attained and established, they would think it themselves a papal bondage to be bound up absolutely unto their apprehensions, from a confinement whereunto in sundry other things, they declare themselves to be at an absolute liberty. Wherefore neither we nor our cause are at all concerned in the rhetorical discourse of Dr. Stillingfleet, concerning the first reformers and their reformation; neither do we at all delight in reflecting on any of the defects of it, desiring only the liberty avowed on Protestant principles, in the discharge of our own duty.

Nor, secondly, are we any more concerned in the long story that ensues about the rise and progress of separation from the church of England, with the mistakes of some in principles, and miscarriages in practice, who judged it their duty to be separate. For as in our refraining from total communion with the parochial assembles of the church of England, we proceed not on the same principles, so we hope that we are free from the same miscarriages with them, or any of an alike nature. But it is also certain, that after the great confusion that was brought on the whole state and order of the church under the Roman apostacy, many of those who attempted a reformation, fell into different opinions and practices in sundry things, which the Papists have made many a long story about. We undertake the defence only of our own principles and practices according unto them. Nor do we esteem ourselves obliged to justify or reflect on others.

And it were no difficult task, to compose a story of the proceedings of some in the church of England with reference unto these differences, that would have as ill an aspect as that which is here reported. Should an account be given of their unaccountable rigour and severity, in that through so many years, yea ages, they would never think of the least abatement of their impositions, in any one instance, though acknowledged by themselves indifferent, and esteemed by others unlawful; although they saw what woful detriment arose to the churches thereby; yea, how instead thereof

they did, to the last of their power, make a progress in the same course, by attempting new canons to inflame the difference, and increased in severities towards all dissenters; should an account be given of the silencings, deprivings, imprisonings, by the high commission court, and in most of the diocesses of the kingdom, of so great numbers of godly, learned, faithful, painful ministers, to the unspeakable disadvantage of the church and nation, with the ruin of the most of them and their families; the representation of their names, qualifications, evident usefulness in the ministry, with the causes of their sufferings, wherein the observance of some ceremonies was openly preferred before the edification of the church, and a great means of the conversion of souls; would give as ill a demonstration of Christian wisdom, love, moderation, condescension, zeal for the propagation of the gospel, as any thing doth on the other hand, in the history before us. It would not be omitted on such an occasion to declare what multitudes of pious peaceable Protestants were driven by their severities to leave their native country, to seek a refuge for their lives and liberties, with freedom for the worship of God in a wilderness in the ends of the earth; and if it be said that what some did herein, they did in the discharge of the duties of their office; I must say, I shall hardly acknowledge that office to be of the institution of Christ, whereunto it belongs in a way of duty, to ruin and destroy so many of his disciples, for no other cause but a desire and endeavour to serve and worship him, according unto what they apprehend to be his mind revealed in the gospel. Should there be added hereunto, an account of the administration of ecclesiastical discipline in the courts of chancellors, commissaries, officials, and the like, as unto the authority and causes, with the way and manner of their proceedings, in the exercise of their jurisdiction, with the woful scandals that have been given thereby, with an addition of sundry other things which I will not so much as mention; I suppose it would as much conduce unto peace and reconciliation among Protestants, as the story here given us by our author.

But setting aside the aggravations of things gathered out of controversial writings (wherein few men do observe

the due rules of moderation, but indulge unto themselves the liberty of severe censures and sharp reflections on them they do oppose), the sum and truth of the story concerning these things may be reduced into a narrow compass. For,

1. It is certain that from the first dawning of the reformation in this nation, there were different apprehensions among them that jointly forsook the papacy as unto its doctrine and worship, about the state, rule, order, and discipline of the church, with sundry things belonging unto its worship also; I suppose this will not be denied.

2. There doth not remain any record, of a due attempt and endeavour for the composing these differences before one certain way was established by those in power. And whereas the state and condition wherein they were at that time, from the confusions about religion that were then abroad, and the pertinaciousness of the generality of the people in an adherence unto their old ways and observances in religion, with a great scarcity in able ministers, the greatest part of the bishops and clergy disliking the whole reformation, they found themselves as they judged necessitated to make as little alteration in the present state of things as was possible, so as to keep up an appearance of the same things in the church, which had been in former use. On these grounds the state and rule of the church was continued in the same form and posture that it was before under the papacy, the authority of the pope only being excluded, and the power of disposal of ecclesiastical affairs usurped by him, declared to be in the king. So also in imitation of that book of worship and service which the people had been accustomed unto, another was established, with the ceremonies most obvious unto popular observation.

3. This order was unsatisfactory unto great numbers of ministers and others, who yet considering what the necessity of the times did call for, did outwardly acquiesce in it in several degrees, in hopes of a farther reformation in a more convenient season. Nor did they cease to plead and press for it by all quiet and peaceable means; abstaining in the mean time, from the use of the ceremonies, and full compliance with episcopal jurisdiction.

4. Hereon those who were for the establishment, having secured their interests therein, and obtained power, began after awhile to oppress, excommunicate, silence, deprive, and imprison those who dissented from them, and could not come up unto a full practical compliance with their institutions and rules. Yet the generality of those so silenced and deprived, abode in privacy under their sufferings, hoping for a reformation at one time or another, without betaking themselves unto any other course for the edification of themselves or their people.

5. After sundry years, some men, partly silenced and deprived, as unto their ministry, and partly pursued with other censures and penalties, began to give place unto severe thoughts of the church of England and its communion, and withdrawing themselves into foreign parts openly avowed a separation from it. And if the extremities which many had been put unto for their mere dissent and nonconformity unto the established rule, which with a good conscience they could not comply with, were represented, it might, if not excuse, yet alleviate the evil of that severity in separation which they fell into.

6. But hereon a double inconvenience, yea, evil did ensue, whence all the advantages made use of in this story, to load the present cause of the nonconformists, did arise.

For, (1.) Many of those who refused to conform unto the church in all its constitutions, yet thought it their duty to wait quietly for a national reformation, thinking no other possible, began to oppose and write against them who utterly separated from the church, condemning its assemblies as unlawful. And herein, as the manner of men is on such occasions, they fell into sharp invectives against them, with severe censures and sentences concerning them and their practice.

And, (2.) Those who did so separate, being not agreed among themselves, as unto all principles of church-order, nor as unto the measures of their separation from the church of England, there fell out differences and disorders among them, accompanied with personal imprudences and miscarriages, in not a few. Neither was it scarcely ever otherwise among them who first attempted any reformation, unless like the apostles they were infallibly guided. These mutual

contests which they had among themselves, and with the nonconformists who abode in their private stations in England, with their miscarriages also, were published unto the world in their own writings and those of their enemies.

'Hinc omnis pendet Lucilius.' These were the things that gave advantage unto, and are the substance of, the history of our author concerning separation; wherein all I can find unto our present instruction is, that

Iliacos intra muros peccatur et extra;

There are and ever were sins, faults, follies, and miscarriages among all sorts of men; which might be farther evidenced by recounting on the other hand what were the ways, acts, and deeds at the same time of those by whom the others were cast out and rejected. And whereas it was the design of the reverend author to load the cause and persons of the present nonconformists with prejudice and contempt, it is well fallen out, in the merciful disposal of things towards and amongst us, by the providence and grace of God, that he is forced to derive the principal matter of his charge from what was done by a few private persons, three or fourscore years ago and more, in whose principles and practices we are not concerned. And as for the difference that fell out more lately among the divines in the assembly at Westminster, about the ways, means, and measures of reformation and mutual forbearance, which he gives us a large account of in a long transcription out of their writings, I must have more health, and strength, and leisure than now I have (which I look not for in this world), before I esteem myself concerned to engage in that contest, or to apologize for the one side or other. The things in agitation between them had no relation unto our present dissent from the church of England, being here insisted on merely to fill up the story, with reference unto the general end designed.

Neither to my knowledge did I ever read a book, wherein there was a greater appearance of diligence in the collection of things, words, sayings, expressions, discourses unto other ends, which might only cast odium on the cause opposed, or give advantage for arguings unto a seeming success, very little or no way at all belonging unto the cause in hand, than there is in this of our reverend author, though much in the same way and kind hath been before attempted.

But separation it is and schism which we are all charged withal, and the evil thereof is aggravated in the words of the author himself, and in large transcriptions out of the writings of others. Schism indeed we acknowledge to be an evil, a great evil; but are sorry that with some, a pretended unproved schism is become almost all that is evil in the churches or their members; so that let men be what they will, drenched, yea, overwhelmed in ignorance, vice, and sin, so they do not separate, (which to be sure, in that state they will not do, for why should he who hath plague sores upon him depart from the society of them that are infected?) they seem to be esteemed, as unto all the concerns of the church, very unblamable.

The truth is, considering the present state and condition of the inhabitants of this nation, who are generally members of the church of England, how 'the land is filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel,' God giving us every day renewed tokens and indications of his displeasure, no compliance with his calls, no public reformation being yet attempted; it seems a more necessary duty, and of more importance unto them upon whom the care of such things is incumbent, to endeavour in themselves, and to engage a faithful ministry throughout the nation, both to give a due example in their conversations, and to preach the word with all diligence, for the turning of the people from the evil of their ways, than to spend their time and strength in the management of such charges against those who would willingly comply with them, as unto all the great ends of religion amongst men.

But this must be farther spoken unto. I say, therefore, 1. In general, that whereas the whole design of this book is to charge all sorts of nonconformists with schism, and to denounce them schismatics; yet the author of it doth not once endeavour to state the true notion and nature of schism, wherein the consciences of men may be concerned. He satisfies himself in the invectives of some of the ancients against schism, applicable unto those which were in their days, wherein we are not concerned. Only he seems to proceed on the general notion of it, that it is a causeless separation from a true church, which departs from that of the Romanists, who will allow no separation from the church

but what is causeless. To make application hereof unto us, it is supposed,

(1.) That the church of England is a true church in its national constitution, and so are all the parochial churches in it; which can be no way justified but by a large extensive interpretation of the word true. For there is but one sort of churches instituted by Christ and his apostles; but national and parochial churches differ in their whole kind, and therefore cannot both of them be of a divine original.

(2.) That we are members of this church by our own consent. How we should come to be so otherways, I know not; if we are so by being born and baptized in England, then those who are born beyond sea and baptized there, are made members of this church by an act of parliament for their naturalization, and no otherwise.

(3.) That we separate from this church, in things wherein we are obliged by the authority of Christ to hold communion with it; which neither is nor will ever be proved, nor is it endeavoured so to be by any instances in this treatise.

(4.) That to withhold communion from parochial assemblies in the worship of God, as unto things confessedly not of divine institution, is schism, that kind of schism which is condemned by the ancient writers of the church. Upon these and the like suppositions, it is no uneasy thing to make vehement declamations against us, and severe reflections on us; all is schism and schismatics, and all of the same kind, with what was written against by Cyprian and Austin, and others a great many.

But the true state of the controversy between him and us, is this and no other; namely, Whether a dissent in, and forbearance from, the communion of churches, in their state and kind not of divine institution, or so far as they are not of divine institution, and from things in other churches that have no such divine institution, nor any scriptural authority to oblige us unto their observance, be to be esteemed schism in them who maintain and professedly avow communion in faith and love with all the true churches of Christ in the world. This is the whole of what we are concerned in, which where it is spoken unto, it shall be considered. But because there were in the primitive churches, certain persons who on

arbitrary principles of their own, consisting for the most part in gross and palpable errors, which they would have imposed on all others, did separate from the catholic church, that is, all other Christians in the world, and all the churches of Christ, condemning them as no churches, allowing not the administration of sacraments unto them, nor salvation unto their members, whom the ancient church condemned with great severity, and that justly as guilty of schism, their judgment, their words and expressions are applied unto us, who are no way concerned in what they speak of or unto. We are not therefore in the least terrified with what is alleged out of the ancients about schism, no more than he is, when the same instances, the same authorities, the same quotations, are made use of by the Papists against the church of England, as they are continually. For, as was said, we know that we are no way concerned in them. And suppose that all that the doctor allegeth against us be true, and that we are in the wrong in all that is charged on us ; yet I dare refer it to the doctor himself to determine, whether it be of the same nature with what was charged on them who made schisms in the church of old. I suppose I guess well enough what he will say, to secure his charge, and it shall be considered where it is spoken.

But, as was said, the great and only design of the author of this book, is to prove all nonconformists to be schismatics, or guilty of the sin of schism. How he hath succeeded in this attempt, shall be afterward considered. And something I have spoken in the ensuing discourse, concerning the nature of schism, which will manifest how little we are concerned in this charge. But yet it may not be amiss in this place, to mind both him and others, of some of those principles whereon we ground our justification in this matter, that it may be known what they must farther overthrow, and what they must establish who shall persist in the management of this charge ; that is indeed through want of love, in a design to heighten and perpetuate our divisions. And,

The first of these principles is, That there is a rule prescribed by our Lord Jesus Christ, unto all churches and believers, in a due attendance whereunto, all the unity and peace, which he requireth amongst his disciples, do consist.

We acknowledge this to be our fundamental principle.

Nor can the rhetoric or arguments of any man, affect our consciences with a sense of the guilt of schism, until one of these things be proved; namely, either,

First, That the Lord Christ hath given no such rule, as in the observance whereof, peace and unity may be preserved in his church; or,

Secondly, That we refuse a compliance with that rule, in some one instance or other, of what therein he hath himself appointed. Unless one or the other be proved, and that strictly and directly, not pretended so to be, by perpetual diversions from the things in question, no vehement assertions of any of us to be schismatics, nor aggravations of the guilt of schism, will signify any thing in this cause.

But that our principle herein is according unto truth, we are fully persuaded. There is a rule of Christ's given, which whosoever walk according unto, 'peace shall be on them and mercy, as on the whole Israel of God;' Gal. vi. 16. And we desire no more, no more is needful unto the peace and unity of the church; and this rule, whatever it be, is of his giving and appointment. No rule of men's invention or imposition, can by its observance secure us of an interest in that peace and mercy, which is peculiar unto the Israel of God. God forbid we should entertain any such imagination. We know well enough men may be thorough conformists to such rules, unto whom, as unto their present state and condition, neither peace nor mercy do belong; for there is no peace to the wicked. He who hath directed and commanded the end of church unity and peace, hath also appointed the means and measures of them. Nothing is more disagreeable unto, nothing more inconsistent with, the wisdom, care, and love of Christ unto his church, than an imagination, that whereas he strictly enjoins peace and unity in his church, he hath not himself appointed the rules, bounds, and measures of them, but left it unto the will and discretion of men. As if his command unto his disciples had been, Keep peace and unity in the church, by doing and observing whatever some men, under a pretence of being the guides of the church, shall make necessary unto that end; whereas it is plainly otherwise, namely, That we should so keep the peace and unity of the church, by doing and observing all whatever that he commands us. And besides we strictly require, that

some one instance be given us, of a defect in the rule given by Christ himself, which must be supplied by human additions, to render it complete for the end of church-peace and unity. In vain have we desired, in vain may we for ever expect, any instance of that kind.

This principle we shall not be easily dispossessed of; and whilst we are under the protection of it, we have a safe retreat and shelter from the most vehement accusations of schism for a non-compliance with a rule, none of his, different from his, and in some things contrary unto his, for the preservation of church-peace and unity. All the dispute is, whether we keep unto this of Christ or no; wherein we are ready at any time to put ourselves upon the trial, being willing to teach or learn, as God shall help us.

Secondly, we say, That this rule in general is the rule of faith, love, and obedience, contained and revealed in the Scripture, and in particular the commands that the Lord Christ hath given for the order and worship that he requires in his churches. It may seem strange to some, that we should suppose the due observance of the rule of faith, love, and obedience, that is, of faith real and unfeigned, love fervent and without dissimulation, and of universal, gracious, evangelical obedience, to be necessary unto the preservation of church-peace and unity. But we do affirm with some confidence, that the only real foundation of them doth lie herein, nor do we value that ecclesiastical peace which may be without it, or is neglective of it. Let all the Christian world, or those therein who concern themselves in us, know, that this is our principle and our judgment, That no church-peace or unity is valued by or accepted with Jesus Christ, that is not founded in, that doth not arise from, and is the effect of, a diligent attendance unto, and observance of, the entire gospel rule of faith and obedience. In the neglect hereof, peace is but carnal security, and unity is nothing but a conspiracy against the rule of Christ: add hereunto in particular, the due observation of what the Lord Christ hath appointed to be done and observed in his churches, as unto their order, rule, and worship; and they who walk according unto this rule need not fear the charge of schism from the fiercest of their adversaries. Wherefore we say,

Thirdly, Those who recede from this rule, in any material branch of it, are guilty of the breach of church-unity, according to the measure of their exorbitancy. As suppose that any preach, teach, or profess doctrines that are contrary to the form of wholesome words, especially with reference unto the person, offices, and grace of Christ, which are the subject of doctrines purely evangelical, they break the peace of the church, and we are bound to separate or withdraw communion from them, which is a means of preserving the true peace and unity of the church. 'Speciosum quidem est nomen pacis, et pulchra opinio unitatis, sed quis ambigat eam solam, unicam, ecclesiæ pacem esse, quæ Christi est,' saith Hilary. Suppose that men retain a form of godliness in the profession of the truth, but deny the power of it, acting their habitual lusts and corruptions in a vicious conversation: they overthrow the foundation of the church's unity, and we are obliged from such to turn away. The like may be said of those who live in a constant neglect of any of the commands of Christ, with respect unto the order, rule, and worship of the church, with a contempt of the means appointed by him for their edification. All these, according unto the measures of their deviations from the rule of Christ, do disturb the foundation of all church-peace and unity. And therefore we say,

Fourthly, That conscience is immediately and directly concerned in no other church-unity as such, but what is an effect of the rule of Christ given unto that end. We know what is spoken concerning obedience unto the guides and rulers of the church, which is a part of the rule of Christ. But we know withal, that this obedience is required of us, only as they teach us to observe and do all that he hath commanded; for other commission from him they have none. When this rule is forsaken, and another substituted in the room of it, as it quickly diverts the minds of men from a conscientious attendance unto that rule of Christ as the only means of church-unity, so that other doth either proceed from men's secular interests, or may easily be accommodated thereunto. And whereas the lines of it must be drawn in the fields of pretended indifferences, and real arbitrariness, it will be the cause of endless contentions; whilst whatever some think themselves to have power to

appoint, others will judge themselves to have liberty to refuse.

Fifthly, It is unity of Christ's appointment that schism respects as a sin against it, and not uniformity in things of men's appointment. And,

Lastly, Those who charge schism on others for a dissent from themselves, or the refraining of total communion with them; must,

1. Discharge themselves of the charge of it, in a consistence with their charge on them. For we find as yet no arrows shot against us, but such as are gathered up in the fields, shot at them that use them out of the Roman quiver. Neither will it avail them to say, that they have other manner of reason for their separation from the church of Rome, than any we have for our withdrawing communion from them. For the question is not what reasons they have for what they do; but what right and power they have to do it, namely, to separate from the church whereof they were, constituting a new church-state of their own, without the consent of that church, and against the order and authority of the same.

2. Require no communion but by virtue of the rule before declared. In no other are we concerned, with respect unto the peace and unity of the church.

3. Give a farther confirmation, than what we have yet seen, unto the principles or presumptions they proceed upon in the management of the charge of schism; as that, (1.) Diocesan bishops, with their metropolitans, are of divine institution. (2.) That the power of rule in and over all churches is committed unto them alone. (3.) That the church hath power to ordain religious rites and ceremonies, nowhere prescribed in the Scripture, and impose the observation of them on all members of the church. (4.) That this church they are. (5.) That no man's voluntary consent is required to constitute him a member of any church, but that every one is surprised into that state whether he will or no. (6.) That there is nothing of force in the arguments pleaded for non-compliance with arbitrary unnecessary impositions. (7.) That the church standeth in no need of reformation, neither in doctrine, discipline, nor conversation; with sundry other things of an alike nature, that they need unto their justification.

But yet when all is done, it will appear, that mutual forbearance, first removing animosities, then administering occasion of inoffensive converse, unto the revival of decayed affections, leading unto sedate conferences and considerations of a more entire conjunction in the things whereunto we have attained, will more conduce unto universal peace and gospel unity, than the most fierce contentions about things in difference, or the most vehement charges of schism against dissenters.

But I must return to the argument, and shall add something giving light into the nature of schism, from an instance in the primitive churches.

That which is first in any kind, gives the measure of what follows in the same kind, and light into the nature of them. Whereas, therefore, the schism that was among the churches about the observation of Easter, was the first that fell out unto the disturbance of their communion, I shall give a brief account of it, as far as the question in hand is concerned in it.

It is evident that the apostles did with care and diligence teach the doctrine of Christian liberty, warning the disciples to stand fast in it, and not submit their necks unto any yoke of bondage, in the things of the worship of God; especially the apostle Paul had frequent occasions to treat of this subject. And what they taught in doctrine, they established and confirmed in their practice. For they enjoined nothing to be observed in the church but what was necessary, and what they had the command of Christ for; leaving the observation of things indifferent unto their original indifference. But whereas they had decreed, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, some necessary condescensions in the Gentile believers towards the Jews, in case of offence or scandal; they did themselves make use of their liberty to comply with the same Jews, in some of their observances, not yet unlawful. Hereon there ensued in several churches different observations of some rites and customs, which they apprehended were countenanced by the practice of the apostles, at least as it had been reported unto them. For immediately after the decease of the apostles, very many mistakes and untruths were reported concerning what they said, did, and practised, which some diligently collected from old men (it may be almost delirant), as Eusebius gives an instance in

Papias, lib. 3. cap. 36. And even the great Irenæus himself was imposed upon, in a matter directly contrary to the Scripture, under a pretence of apostolical tradition. Among those reports was that of the observation of Easter. And for awhile the churches continued in these different observances, without the least disturbance of their communion, each one following that which it thought the most probable tradition, for rule of Scripture they pretended not unto. But after awhile they began to fall into a contest about these things, which began at Laodicea, which church was as likely to strive about such things as any other. For Eusebius tells us, that Melito, the bishop of Sardis, wrote two books about Easter, beginning the first with an account that he wrote them, when Servilius Paulus was proconsul, there being then a great stir about it, at Laodicea. Euseb. lib. 4. cap. 25. But as it falls out on such occasions, much talk and disputing ensuing thereon, the differences were increased, until one side or party at variance, would make their opinion and practice the rule and terms of communion unto all other churches. But this was quickly condemned by those who were wise and sober. For as Zozoman affirms, they accounted it a frivolous or foolish thing to differ about a custom, whereas they agreed in all the principal heads of religion. And thereon he gives a large account of different rites and observances in many churches, without any breach of communion among them; adding, that besides those enumerated by him, there were many others in cities and villages which they did in a different manner adhere unto. Hist. lib. 7. cap. 19.

At length this matter fell into the handling of Victor, bishop of Rome. And his judgment was, that the observation of Easter on the Lord's day, and not on the fourteenth day of the first month precisely, according to the computation of the Jews, in the observation of the passover, was to be imposed on all the churches of Christ everywhere. It had all along, until his time, been judged a thing indifferent, wherein the churches and all believers were left unto the use of their own liberty. He had no pretence of any divine institution making it necessary, the writers of those days constantly affirming, that the apostles made no canons, rules, or laws about such things. He had persons

of as great worth as any in the world, as Melito, Polycrates, Polycarpus, that opposed him, not only as unto the imposition of his practice on others, but as unto his error as they judged in the matter of fact and right. Yet all this could not hinder but that he would needs have the reputation of the father of schisms among the churches of Christ by his impositions, and cut off all the Asian churches from communion, declaring them and their members excommunicate. Euseb. lib. 5. cap. 23.

The noise hereof coming abroad unto other churches, great offence was taken at it by many of them, and Victor was roundly dealt withal by sundry of them who agreed with him in practice, but abhorred his imposition of it, and making it a condition of church communion.

Among those who so opposed and rebuked him, Irenæus was the most eminent. And I shall observe some few things out of the fragment of his epistle, as it is recorded by Euseb. lib. 5. cap. 23.

And, (1.) He tells us, that 'he wrote unto Victor in the name of those brethren in France whom he did preside amongst.' The custom of considering things of this nature with all the brethren of the church, and writing their determination, in their name, was not yet grown out of use, though the practice of it now would be esteemed novel and schismatical.

(2.) He tells Victor, that 'there were great varieties in this thing, as also in the times and seasons of fasting, which did not,' saith he, 'begin or arise in our days, but long before was introduced by such, who being in places of rule, rejected and changed the common and simple customs which the church had before.' The doctor, therefore, need not think it so strange, that an alteration in church-order and rule should fall out in after ages, when long before Irenæus's time such changes were begun.

(3.) He gives hereon that excellent rule, *ἡ διαφωνία τῆς νηστείας τὴν ὁμόνοιαν τῆς πίστεως συνίστησιν*; 'the difference of fastings' (and consequently things of an alike nature), 'commends the concord or agreement of faith.'

This was the first effect of a departure from the only rule of unity and communion among the churches, which was given by Christ himself and his apostles. As hereby great

confusion and disorder was brought upon the churches, so it was the first public inroad that was made on the doctrine of the Scripture, concerning Christian liberty. And as it was also the first instance of rejecting men otherwise sound in the faith from communion, for nonconformity, or the non-observance of human institutions or traditions, which had therein an unhappy consecration unto the use of future ages; so it was the first notorious entrance into that usurpation of power, in the Roman bishops, which they carried on by degrees unto an absolute tyranny. Neither was there ever a more pernicious maxim broached in the primitive times, nor which had a more effectual influence into the ruin of the first institution and liberty of the churches of Christ. For although the fact of Victor was condemned by many, yet the principle he proceeded on, was afterward espoused and put in practice.

Our reverend author will hardly find an instance before this of schism among any churches that retained the substance of the doctrine of faith, unless it be in those divisions which fell out in some particular churches, among the members of them. And this we affirm to be in general the case of the nonconformists at this day. For admitting such variations as time and other circumstances must necessarily infer, and they are rejected from communion on the same grounds, that Victor proceeded on in the excommunication of the churches of Asia. Neither will there be any end of differences whilst the same principle is retained. Before this, schism was only esteemed a defect in love and breach of the rule of Christ's appointment, for the communion and walking together of believers in the same church.

But this notion of schism is in the judgment of Dr. Stillingfleet, preface, p. 46. 'so mean, so jejune, so narrow a notion of it, that I cannot,' saith he, 'but wonder that men of understanding should be satisfied with it.' But in my judgment, the author of it was a man of good understanding; indeed I have heard him spoken of, as one of abstruse speculations, that did not advantage Christian religion. And one hath published in print, that 'he is one of the obscurest writers that ever he read,' but never heard him before charged with mean and jejune notions. Now this was St. Paul, who expressly chargeth schism on the church of Corinth, because of the

divisions that were among them, namely, the members of the same particular church; so as they could not 'come together in one place,' in a due manner. Nor in all his writings, doth he any where give us any other notion of schism. But, saith he, 'this is short of that care of the church's peace, which Christ hath made so great a duty of his followers.' But if there be no other rule, no other duty for the preservation of the church's peace, but only, that no separation be made from it, which is called schism, we might have been all quiet in the church of Rome. Let no man think to persuade us, but that for the preservation of the church's peace, it is required of us, that we do and observe all things that Christ requireth of us, and that we enjoy not the observation of what he hath not commanded, on Victor's penalty of being excluded from communion; that faith, and love, and holiness be kept and promoted in the church, by all the ways of his appointment; and when these things are attended unto, St. Paul's mean and jejune notion of schism will be of good use also.

Nor was there the least appearance of any other kind of schism among the churches of Christ until that which was occasioned by Victor, of which we have spoken. The schisms that followed afterward, were six to one, from the contentions of bishops, or those who had an ambition so to be, which the apostle foresaw, as Clemens witnesseth, and made provision against it, but that no banks are strong enough to confine the overflowing ambition of some sort of persons. But, saith the doctor, preface, p. 47. 'The obligation to preserve the peace of the church, extends to all lawful constitutions, in order to it. Therefore to break the peace of the church we live in, for the sake of any lawful orders and constitutions made to preserve it, is directly the sin of schism.'

Now schism, he tell us, is 'as great and dangerous a sin as murder,' p. 45. and we know 'that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him;' 1 John iii. 15. So that all men here seem to be adjudged unto hell, who comply not with, who submit not unto, our ecclesiastical constitutions or canons. God forbid that ever such doctrine should be looked on as to have the least affinity unto the gospel, or such censures to have any savour of the spirit of Christ in them. The Lord Jesus Christ hath not cast the eternal condition of those

whom he purchased with his own most precious blood, into the arbitrary disposal of any that shall take upon them to make ecclesiastical constitutions and orders, for conformity in rites and ceremonies, &c. Shall we think that he who upon the best use of means for his instruction which he is capable of, with fervent prayers to God for light and direction, cannot comply with, and submit unto, some ecclesiastical constitutions and orders, however pretended to be made for the preservation of peace and unity of the church, on this ground principally, because they are not of the appointment, nor have the approbation of Jesus Christ, though he should mistake herein and miss of his duty, is guilty of no less sin than that of murder; suppose of Cain in killing his brother? for all murder is from hatred and malice. This is that which inflames the differences amongst us. For it is a scandal of the highest nature, when men do see that persons who in any thing dissent from our ecclesiastical constitutions, though otherwise sober, honest, pious, and peaceable, are looked on as bad, if not worse than thieves and murderers, and are dealt withal accordingly. Nor can any thing be more effectual to harden others in their immoralities, than to find themselves approved by the guides of the church in comparison with such dissenters.

But, (2.) Who is it that shall make these orders and constitutions, that must be observed for the preservation of the unity and peace of the church? It can be none but those who have power so to do by being uppermost in any place or time. Who shall judge them to be lawful? No doubt they that make them. And what shall these constitutions be about, what shall they extend unto? Any thing in the world, so there be no mention of it in the Scripture one way or other. What if any one should now dissent from these constitutions, and not submit unto them? Why then he is guilty of schism, as great and dangerous a sin as that of murder. But when all is done; what if these constitutions and orders should be no ways needful or useful unto the preservation of the peace of the church? What if a supposition that they are so, reflects dishonour on the wisdom and love of Christ? What if they are unlawful and unwarrantable, the Lord Christ not having given power and authority unto any sort of men to make any such constitutions? What if they are the great

ways and means of breaking the unity and peace ofthe church? These and other inquiries of the like nature must be clearly resolved, not by the dictates of men's own minds and spirits, but from the word of truth, before this intimation can be complied withal.

But that which is fallen out most beyond expectation in this whole discourse, is that the reverend author, seeking by all ways and means, countenanced with the least resemblance or appearance of truth, to load the nonconformists and their cause with the imputation of things invidious and burdensome, should fix upon their prayers, by virtue of the grace and gift of prayer which they have received, ascribing the original of its use unto the artifice and insinuation of the Jesuits, as he doth, preface, pp. 14, 15. But because I look on this as a thing of the greatest importance of all the differences between them and us, as that wherein the life of religion, the exercise of faith, and the labour of divine love do much consist, the nature and necessity of that kind of prayer, which is here reflected on and opposed, shall, God willing, be declared and vindicated in a peculiar discourse unto that purpose. For the differences that are between us cannot possibly have any more pernicious consequence, than if we should be influenced by them to oppose or condemn any principles or exercise of the duties of practical holiness, as thinking them to yield matter of advantage to one party or another.

The great pains he hath taken in this preface to prove the nonconformists to have been the means of furthering and promoting popery in this nation, might, as I suppose, have been omitted without any disadvantage unto himself or his cause. For the thing itself is not true, as it is utterly impossible to affect the minds or consciences of the nonconformists with a sense of it, because they have a thousand witnesses in themselves, against the truth of the charge; so it is impossible it should be believed by any who are in the least acquainted with their principles, or have their eyes open to see any thing that is doing at this day in religion. But as there are many palpable mistakes in the account he gives of things among ourselves to this purpose, so if on the other hand any should out of reports, surmises, Jesuits' letters and politics, particularly those of Contzen, books written to that

purpose against them, agreement of principles, notorious compliance of some bishops and others of the same way with the Papists, some dying avowedly such, stories of what hath been said at Rome and elsewhere, which are not few nor unproveable, concerning the inclinations of many unto a fair composition of things with the church of Rome, the deportment of some before and since the discovery of the plot, with such other topics as the discourse of our author with respect unto the nonconformists will furnish them withal; as also from the woful neglect there hath been of instructing the people in the principles of religion, so as to implant a sense of the life and power of it on their souls, with all things that may be spoken on that head with reference unto the clergy under their various distributions, with the casting out of so great number of ministers who they knew in their own conscience to be firmly fixed against popery and its interest in this nation, and could not deny but they might be useful to instruct the people in the knowledge of the truth, and encourage them by their example unto the practice of it; if any, I say, should on these and the like grounds, not in a way of recrimination, nor as a requital of the doctor's story, but merely as a necessary part of the defence of their own innocency, charge the same guilt of giving occasion unto the growth, increase, and danger of popery in this nation on the episcopal party, I know not now how they could be well blamed for it, nor what will be done of that kind. For they who will take liberty to speak what they please, must be content sometimes to hear what will displease. For my part I had rather, if it were possible, that these things at present might be omitted, and that all those who are really united in opposition unto popery, as I am assured in particular that this reverend author and I am, would rather consider how we might come out of the danger of it wherein we are, than at present to contest how we came unto it. This I speak seriously, and that under the consideration of this discourse, which upon the account of sundry mistakes in matter of fact, of great defects in point of charity, with a design to expose others unto reproach for their great crimes, of being willing to be a little freed from being beaten, fined, punished, and imprisoned, by their means and on their accounts, is as apt to excite new exasperations, and to provoke

the spirits of them concerned, as any I have read of late. However, the defence of our own innocency must not be forsaken. But,

Cumque superba foret Babylon spolianda trophæis.

It is not praiseworthy to abide in these contests beyond necessity.

This discourse indeed of the reverend author is increased into so large a volume, as might justly discourage any from undertaking the examination of it, who hath any other necessary duties to attend unto. But if there be separated from it the consideration of stories of things and persons long since past, wherein we are not concerned, with the undue application of what was written by some of the ancients against the schims in their days, unto our present differences; as also the repetition of a charge that we do not refrain communion from the parochial churches on the grounds and reasons which we know to the contrary that we do; with the report and quotation of the words and sayings of men, by whose judgment we are not determined; with frequent diversions from the question, by attempting advantages from this or that passage or expression in one or another; and the rhetorical aggravations of things that might be plainly expressed, and quickly issued; and the controversy may be reduced into a narrower compass.

It is acknowledged that the differences which are amongst Protestants in this nation are to be bewailed, because of the advantages which the common enemy of the Protestant interest doth endeavour to make thereby. Howbeit the evil consequences of them do not arise from the nature of the things themselves, but from the interests, prejudices, and biassed affections of them amongst whom they are. Nor shall any man ever be able to prove, but that on the doctrinal agreement which we all profess (provided it be real), we may, notwithstanding the differences that remain, enjoy all that peace and union, which are prescribed unto the churches and disciples of Christ; provided that we live in the exercise of that love which he enjoineth us; which whilst it continues in the profession of the same faith, it is impossible there should be any schism among us. Wherefore, whereas some are very desirous to state the controversy on this supposition, that there is a schism among us, and issue

it in an inquiry, on which side the blame of it is to be laid, wherein they suppose they need no farther justification but the possession of that church-state which is established by law; I shall willingly forego the charging of them with the whole occasion of the schism pretended, until they can prove there is such a schism, which I utterly deny. For the refraining of communion with parochial assemblies, on the grounds whereon we do refrain, hath nothing of the nature of schism in it, neither as it is stated in the Scripture, nor as it was esteemed of in the primitive churches, amongst whom there were differences of as great importance, without any mutual charges of schism. Wherefore, although we cannot forego utterly the defence of our own innocency against such charges as import no less than a heinous guilt of sin against God, and eminent danger of ruin from men; yet we shall constantly unite ourselves with and unto all who sincerely endeavour the promotion of the great ends of Christian religion, and the preservation of the interest of Protestant religion, in this nation.

Something I judge necessary to add concerning my engagement, or rather surprisal, into this controversy, against my inclination and resolution.

The doctor tells us, preface, p. 51. 'That when his sermon came first out, it went down quietly enough; and many of the people began to read and consider it, being pleased to find so weighty and necessary a point debated with so much calmness and freedom from passion; which being discovered by the leaders and managers of the party, it was soon resolved that the sermon must be cried down, and the people dissuaded from reading of it. If any of them were talked withal about it, they shrunk up their shoulders and looked sternly; and shook their heads, and hardly forbore some bitter words, both of the author and the sermon:' (which it seems he knows, though they did forbear to do so;) and much more to the same purpose. And, p. 58. 'As if they had been the Papists' instruments to execute the fury of their wrath and displeasure against me, they summon in the power of their party, and resolve with their force and might to fall upon me;' with more to the same purpose. And p. 59. 'After awhile they thought fit to draw their strength into the open field; and the first who appeared was,' &c.

I confess I was somewhat surprised, that coming into

this coast, all things should appear so new and strange unto me, as that I could fix on no one mark to discover that I had ever been there before. For I am as utter a stranger unto all these things as unto the counsels of the pope or Turk. The doctor seems to apprehend, that at the coming forth of his sermon, at least after its worth and weight were observed, there was a consternation and disorder among the nonconformists, as if Hannibal had been at the gates. For hereby he supposeth they were cast into those ugly postures of shrinking and staring and shaking, and swelling with what they could hardly forbear to utter. But these things with those that follow seem to me to be romantic, and somewhat tragically expressed, sufficiently evidencing, that other stories told by the same author in this case stand in need of some grains of allowance, to reduce them to the royal standard. For whereas I am the first person instanced in that should have a hand in the management of these contrivances, I know nothing at all of them, nor upon the utmost inquiry I have made, can I hear of any such things among the parties, or the managers of them, as they are called. It is true the preaching and publishing of the doctor's sermon at that time was by many judged unseasonable, and they were somewhat troubled at it, more upon the account that it was done by him, than that it was done. But otherwise as to the charge of schism managed therein against them, they were neither surprised with it nor discomposed at it. And so far as I know, it was the season alone, and the present posture of affairs in the nation, calling for an agreement among all Protestants, that occasioned any answer unto it.

It is therefore no small mistake, that we dissuaded any from reading his sermon, which hath been commonly objected by some other writers of the same way. But if we were enemies unto these worthy persons, we could not desire they should have more false intelligence from our tents than they seem to have. This is not our way. Those who are joined with us, are so upon their own free choice and judgment; nor do we dissuade them from reading the discourses of any on the subject of our differences. The rule holds herein, 'to try all things and hold fast that which is good.'

Nor do I know any thing in the least of advices or agree-

ments to cry down and oppose, confute or answer the doctor's sermon. Nor do I believe that there were ever any such among those who are charged with them. And what shall be said unto those military expressions, of 'summoning in the power of the party, resolved to fall on, think fit to draw their strength into the field?' &c. I say, what shall we say to these things? I am not a little troubled that I am forced to have any concernment in the debate of these differences, wherein men's sense of their interest, or of provocations they have received, cast them on such irregular ways of defence and retaliation. For all these things are but fruits of imagination, that have nothing of truth or substance to give countenance unto them.

The way whereby I became to be at all engaged in this contest, and the reasons whereon I undertook a harmless defence of our innocency, as to the charge of schism at this time, I shall give a brief account of.

Some days after the doctor's sermon was printed and published, one of those whom he supposeth we persuaded not to read it, brought it unto me, and gave it me, with such a character of it, as I shall not repeat. Upon the perusal of it (which I did on his desire, being uncertain to this day, whether, without that occasion, I had ever read it at all), I confess I was both surprised and troubled, and quickly found that many others were so also. For as there was then a great hope and expectation, that all Protestants would cement and unite in one common cause and interest for the defence and preservation of religion against the endeavours of the Papists for its subversion; so it was thought by wise men of all sorts, that the only medium and expedient for this end was, the deposing of the consideration of the lesser differences among ourselves, and burying all animosities that had arisen from them. And I yet suppose myself at least excusable, that I judged the tendency of that discourse to lie utterly another way. Nor is it in my power to believe, that a peremptory charge of schism upon any dissenters, considering what is the apprehension and judgment of those who make that charge concerning it, with respect unto God and men, is a means to unite us in one common religious interest. And on this account, not knowing in the least that any other person had undertaken,

or would undertake the consideration of the doctor's sermon, I thought that my endeavour for the removal of the obstacle cast in the way unto a sincere coalition in the unity of faith among all sorts of Protestants, might not be unacceptable. Neither did I see any other way whereby this might be done, but only by a vindication of the dissenters from the guilt of that state, which, if it be truly charged on them, must render our divisions irreconcilable. And continuing still of the same mind, I have once more renewed the same defensative, with no other design but to maintain hopes, that peace and love may yet be preserved among us, during the continuation of these differences. And whereas it is a work of almighty power, to reduce Christian religion unto its first purity and simplicity, which will not be effected but by various providential dispensations in the world, and renewed effusions of the Holy Spirit from above; which are to be waited for; and seeing that all endeavours for national reformation are attended with insuperable difficulties, few churches being either able or willing to extricate themselves from the dust of traditions and time, with the rust of secular interests; I would hope that they shall not be always the object of public severities, who keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of truth and peace, with all sincere disciples of Christ everywhere, do design nothing but a reformation of themselves and their ways, by a universal compliance with the will and word of Christ alone, whom God hath commanded them in all things to hear and obey.

The reduction, I say, of the profession of Christianity in general, unto its primitive purity, simplicity, separation from the world, and all implication with secular interests, so as that it should comprise nothing but the guidance of the souls of men in the life of God, towards the enjoyment of him, is a work more to be prayed for to come in its proper season, than to be expected in this age. Nor do any yet appear fitted in the least measure for the undertaking or attempting such a work, any farther than by their own personal profession and example. And whilst things continue amongst Protestant churches, in the state wherein they are, under the influence of divided secular interests, and advantageous mixtures with them, with the relics of the old general apostacy, by differences in points of doc-

trine, in rules of discipline, in orders of divine worship, it is in vain to look for any union or communion among them, in a compliance with any certain rule of uniformity, either in the profession of faith, or in the practice of worship and discipline. Nor would such an agreement among them, could it be attained, be of any great advantage unto the important ends of religion, unless a revival of the power of it in the souls of men, do accompany it. In the mean time, the glory of our Christian profession in righteousness, holiness, and a visible dedication of its professors unto God, is much lost in the world, innumerable souls perishing through the want of effectual means for their conversion and edification. To attempt public national reformation, whilst things ecclesiastic and civil are so involved as they are, the one being rivetted into the legal constitution of the other, is neither the duty, nor work of private men; nor will, as I suppose, wise men be over forward in attempting any such thing, unless they had better evidence of means to make it effectual, than any that do as yet appear. For the religion of a nation in every form will answer the ministry of it. What is the present duty in this state of things, of those private Christians or ministers, who cannot satisfy their consciences, as unto their duty towards God, without endeavouring a conformity unto the will of Christ, in the observance of all his institutions and commands, confining all their concerns in religion unto things spiritual and heavenly, is the inquiry before us.

AN

INQUIRY

INTO

THE ORIGINAL, NATURE, INSTITUTION, POWER, ORDER, AND COMMUNION

OF

EVANGELICAL CHURCHES.

CHAP. I.

Of the original of churches.

When any thing which is pleaded to belong unto religion or the worship of God is proposed unto us, our first consideration of it ought to be in that inquiry which our Lord Jesus Christ made of the Pharisees concerning the baptism of John; 'Whence is it? from heaven or of men?' He distributes all things which come under that plea or pretence into two heads, as unto their original and efficient cause, namely, heaven and men. And these are not only different and distinct, but so contradictory one unto another, that as unto any thing wherein religion or the worship of God is concerned, they cannot concur as partial causes of the same effect. What is of men is not from heaven; and what is from heaven is not of men. And hence is his determination concerning both sorts of these things: 'Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up;' Matt. xv. 13.

Designing therefore to treat of churches, their original, nature, use, and end, my first inquiry must be, whether they are from heaven or men; that is, whether they are of a divine original, having a divine institution, or whether they are an ordinance or creation of men; for their pedigree must be derived from one of these singly: they never con-

curred in the constitution of any part of divine worship, or any thing that belongs thereunto.

This would seem a case and inquiry of an exceeding easy determination; for the Scripture everywhere makes mention of the church or churches as the ordinances and institutions of God. But such things have fallen out in the world in latter ages, as may make men justly question whether we understand the mind of God aright or no in what is spoken of them: at least if they should allow that the churches so mentioned in the Scripture, were of divine appointment; yet it might be highly questionable, whether those which have since been in the world be not a mere product of the invention and power of men.

1. For many ages, such things alone were proposed unto the world, and imposed on it, for the only church, as were from hell rather than from heaven, at least from men, and those none of the best: for all men in these western parts of the world were obliged to believe and profess, on the penalties of eternal and temporal destruction, that the pope of Rome and those depending on him were the only church in the world. If this should be granted, as it was almost universally in some ages, and in this is earnestly contended for, there would be a thousand evidences to prove that the institution of churches is not from heaven, but from men. Whether the inventions of men in the mystery of iniquity be to be received again or no, men of secular wisdom and interest may do well to consider; but he must be blind and mad, and accursed in his mind and understanding, who can think of receiving it as from heaven as a divine institution. But I have treated of this subject in other discourses.

2. The name, pretence, and presumed power of the church or churches, have been made and used as the greatest engine for the promoting and satisfying the avarice, sensuality, ambition, and cruelty of men that ever was in the world. Never any thing was found out by men or Satan himself, so fitted, suited, and framed to fill and satisfy the lusts of multitudes of men, as this of the church hath been, and yet continues to be: for it is so ordered, is of that make, constitution, and use, that corrupt men need desire no more for the attainment of wealth, honour, grandeur, plea-

sure, all the ends of their lusts spiritual or carnal, but a share in the government and power of the church; nor hath an interest therein been generally used unto any other ends. All the pride and ambition, all the flagitious lives in luxury, sensuality, uncleanness, incests, &c. of popes, cardinals, prelates, and their companions, with their hatred unto, and oppression of, good men, arose from the advantage of their being reputed the church. To this very day, the church here and there as it is esteemed, is the greatest means of keeping Christian religion in its power and purity out of the world: and a temptation to multitudes of men to prefer the church before religion, and to be obstinate in their oppositions unto it. These things being plain and evident unto wise men, who had no share in the conspiracy, nor the benefit of it, how could they think that this church-state was from heaven and not of men?

3. By the church (so esteemed) and in pursuit of its interests, by its authority and power, innumerable multitudes of Christians have been slain or murdered, and the earth soaked with their blood. Two emperors of Germany alone fought above eighty battles for and against the pretended power and authority of the church. It hath laid whole countries desolate with fire and sword, turning cities into ashes and villages into a wilderness, by the destruction of their inhabitants. It was the church which killed, murdered, and burnt innumerable holy persons, for no other reason in the world but because they would not submit their souls, consciences, and practices unto her commands, and be subject unto her in all things. Nor was there any other church conspicuously visible in all these parts of the world; nor was it esteemed lawful once to think that this was not the true church, or that there was or could be any other. For men to believe that this church-state was from heaven, is for them to believe that cruelty, bloodshed, murder, the destruction of mankind, especially of the best, the wisest, and the most holy among them, is the only way to heaven.

4. The secular worldly interest of multitudes lying in this presumptive church and the state of it, they preferred and exalted it above all that is called God, and made the greatest idol of it that ever was in the world. For it was the faith and profession of it, that its authority over the

souls and consciences of men is above the authority of the Scripture, so that they have no authority towards us, unless it be given unto them by this church, and that we neither can nor need believe them to be the word of God, unless they inform us and command us so to do. This usurpation of divine honour in putting itself and its authority above that of the Scripture or word of God, discovers full well whence it was. In like manner those who assumed it unto themselves to be the church, without any other right, title, or pretence unto it, have exalted one amongst them and with him themselves in their several capacities, above all emperors, kings, and princes, nations and people, trampling on them at their pleasure. Is this church-state from heaven? Is it of divine institution? Is it the heart and centre of Christian religion? Is it that which all men must be subject to on pain of eternal damnation? Who that knows any thing of Christ or the gospel can entertain such a thought without detestation and abhorrency?

5. This pretence of the church is at this day, one of the greatest causes of the atheism, that the world is filled withal. Men find themselves, they know not how, to belong unto this or that church; they suppose that all the religion that is required of them, is no more but what this church suggests unto them; and abhorring, through innumerable prejudices, to inquire whether there be any other ministerial church-state or no; understanding at length the church to be a political combination for the wealth, power, and dignity of some persons, they cast away all regard of religion, and become professed atheists.

6. Unto this very day the woful divisions, distractions, and endless controversies that are among Christians, with the dangerous consequences and effects of them, do all spring and arise from the churches that are in the world. Some are for the church of Rome, some for the church of England, some for the Greek church, and so of the rest; which, upon an acknowledgment of such a state of them as is usually allowed, cannot but produce wars and tumults among nations, with the oppression of particular persons in all sorts of calamities. In one place men are killed for not owning of one church, and in another for approving of it. Amongst ourselves prisons are filled, and men's goods spoil-

ed, divisions multiplied, and the whole nation endangered, in a severe attempt to cause all Christians to acknowledge that church-state which is set up among us. In brief, these churches, in the great instance of that of Rome, have been and are the scandal of Christian religion, and the greatest cause of most of the evils and villanies which the world hath been replenished withal. And is it any wonder if men question whether they are from heaven or of men?

For my part, I look upon it as one of the greatest mercies that God hath bestowed on any professed Christians, in these latter ages, that he hath by the light and knowledge of his word, disentangled the souls and consciences of any that do believe, from all respect and trust unto such churches, discovering the vanity of their pretences, and wickedness of their practices, whereby they openly proclaim themselves to be of men and not from heaven. Not that he hath led them off from a church-state thereby, but by the same word revealed that to them which is pure, simple, humble, holy, and so far from giving occasion unto any of the evils mentioned, as that the admittance of it will put an immediate end unto them all. Such shall we find the true and gospel church-state to be in the following description of it. He that comes out of the confusion and disorder of these human (and as unto some of them, hellish) churches; who is delivered from this mystery of iniquity, in darkness and confusion, policies and secular contrivances coming thereon, to obtain a view of the true native beauty, glory, and use of evangelical churches, will be thankful for the greatness of his deliverance.

Whereas therefore for many ages, the church of Rome, with those claiming under it, and depending on it, was esteemed to be the only true church in the world; and nothing was esteemed so highly criminal, not murder, treason, nor incest, as to think of or to assert any other church-state, it was impossible that any wise man not utterly infatuated, could apprehend a church, any church whatever, to be of divine institution or appointment; for all the evils mentioned, and others innumerable, were not only occasioned by it, but they were effects of it, and inseparable from its state and being. And if any other churches also, which, although the people whereof they consist, are of another faith than those

of the Roman church, are like unto it in their make and constitution, exercising the right, power, and authority which they claim unto themselves by such ways and means, as are plainly of this world and of their own invention, they do leave it highly questionable from whence they are as such: for it may be made to appear that such churches, so far as they are such, are obstructive of the sole end of all churches, which is the edification of them that do believe; however any that are of them, or belong unto them, may promote that end by their personal endeavours.

But notwithstanding all these things, it is most certain, that churches are of a divine original; that they are the ordinance and institution of Christ. I am not yet arrived in the order of this discourse, to a convenient season of declaring what is the especial nature, use, and end of such churches as are so the institution of God; and so to give a definition of them, which shall be done afterward; but treat only as unto the general notion of a church, and what is signified thereby. These are of God. And in those churches before described under a corrupt degenerate estate, three things may be considered: 1. What is of man without the least pretence unto the appointment or command of God. Such is the very form, fabric, and constitution of the church of Rome, and those that depend thereon or are conformed thereunto. That which it is, that whereby it is what it is, in its kind, government, rule, and end, is all of man, without the least countenance given unto it from any thing of God's institution. This is that which through a long effectual working of men and Satan, in a mystery of iniquity, it arrived unto. Herewith the saints of God ought to have no compliance, but bear witness against it with their lives, if called thereunto. This in due time the Lord Christ will utterly destroy. 2. Such things as pretend unto a countenance to be given them by divine institution, but horribly corrupted. Such are the name of a church and its power, a worship pretended to be religious and divine; an order as to officers and rulers different from the people, with sundry things of the like nature; these things are good in themselves, but as engrossed into a false church-state, and worship corrupt in themselves, they are of men, and to be abhorred of all that seek after the true church of Christ.

3. There is that which is the essence of a true church, namely, that it be a society of men united for the celebration of divine worship: this so far as it may be found among them, is to be approved.

But churches, as was said, are of a divine original, and have the warrant of divine authority. The whole Scripture is an account of God's institution of churches, and of his dealing with them.

God laid the foundation of church societies and the necessity of them in the law of nature, by the creation and constitution of it. I speak of churches in general, as they are societies of human race, one way or other joined and united together for the worship of God. Now the sole end of the creation of the nature of man, was the glory of God, in that worship and obedience which it was fitted and enabled to perform: for that end, and no other, was our nature created in all its capacities, abilities, and perfections: neither was man so made merely that every individual should singly and by himself perform this worship, though that also every individual person is obliged unto. Every man alone and by himself, will not only find himself indigent, and wanting supplies of sundry kinds; but also that he is utterly disabled to act sundry faculties and powers of his soul, which by nature he is endued withal. Hence the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone;' Gen. ii. 18.

These things therefore are evident in themselves: 1. That God created our nature, or made man for his own worship and service, and fitted the powers and faculties of his soul thereunto. 2. That this nature is so fitted for society, so framed for it as its next end, that without it, it cannot act itself, according unto what it is empowered unto. And this is the foundation of all order and government in the world among mankind. 3. That by the light of nature this acting in society is principally designed unto the worship of God. The power, I say, and necessity of acting in society, is given unto our nature for this end principally, that we may thus glorify God, in and by the worship which he requires of us. 4. That without the worship of God in societies, there would be an absolute failure of one principal end of the creation of man; nor would any glory arise unto God from the constitution of his nature so fitted for society, as that it

cannot act its own powers without it. 5. All societies are to be regulated in the light of nature by such circumstances, as whereby they are suited unto their end; for which they may be either too large or too much restrained.

Hence have we the original of churches in the light of nature; men associating themselves together, or uniting in such societies for the worship of God which he requires of them, as may enable them unto an orderly performance of it, are a church. And hereunto it is required, 1. That the persons so uniting are sensible of their duty, and have not lost the knowledge of the end of their creation and being. 2. That they are acquainted with that divine religious worship, which God requires of them. The former light and persuasion being lost, issues in atheism; and by the loss of this, instead of churches, the generality of mankind have coalesced into idolatrous combinations. 3. That they do retain such innate principles of the light of nature as will guide them in the discharge of their duties in these societies. As, 1. That the societies themselves be such as are meet for their end, fit to exercise and express the worship of God in them, not such as whose constitution makes them unfit for any such end. And this gives the natural bounds of churches in all ages, which it is in vain for any man to endeavour an alteration of, as we shall see afterward. 2. That all things be done decently and in order, in and by these societies. This is a prime dictate of the law of nature, arising from the knowledge of God and ourselves, which hath been wrested into I know not what religious ceremonies of men's invention. 3. That they be ready to receive all divine revelations with faith and obedience, which shall either appoint the ways of God's worship, and prescribe the duties of it, or guide and direct them in its performance, and to regulate their obedience therein. This also is a clear unquestionable dictate of the light and law of nature; nor can be denied but on the principles of downright atheism.

Farther we need not seek for the divine original of churches, or societies of men fearing God, for the discharge of his public worship unto his glory, and their own eternal benefit, according unto the light and knowledge of his mind and will, which he is pleased to communicate unto them.

What concerns the framing and fashioning of churches

by arbitrary and artificial combinations, in provinces, nations, and the like, we shall afterward inquire into. This is the assured foundation and general warranty of particular societies and churches, whilst men are continued on the earth; the especial régulation of them by divine revelation, will in the next place be considered. And he who is not united with others in some such society, lives in open contradiction unto the law of nature and its light, in the principal instances of it.

1. Whereas the directions given by the light of nature in and unto things concerning the outward worship of God, are general only, so as that by them alone, it would be very difficult to erect a church-state in good and holy order; God did always from the beginning, by especial revelations and institution, ordain such things as might perfect the conduct of that light unto such a complete order, as was accepted with himself. So, 1. He appointed a church-state for man in innocency, and completed its order by the sacramental addition of the two trees, the one of life, the other of the knowledge of good and evil.

2. That before the coming of Christ, who was to perfect and complete all divine revelations, and state all things belonging unto the house and worship of God, so as never to admit of the least change or alteration; this church-state, as unto outward order, rites of worship, ways and manner of the administration of things sacred, with its bounds and limits, was changeable, and variously changed. The most eminent change it received, was in the giving of the law, which fixed its state unalterably unto the coming of Christ. Mal. iv. 4—6.

3. That it was God himself alone who made all these alterations and changes; nor would he, nor did he ever allow, that the wills, wisdom, or authority of men, should prescribe rules or measures unto his worship in any thing. Heb. iii. 1—6.

4. That the foundation of every church-state that is accepted with God, is in an express covenant with him, that they receive and enter into, who are to be admitted into that state. A church not founded in a covenant with God, is not from heaven, but of men. Hereof we shall treat

more at large, as I suppose, afterward: see it exemplified, Exod. xxiv.

5. There is no good in, there is no benefit to be obtained by, any church-state whatever, unless we enter into it, and observe it by an act of obedience, with immediate respect unto the authority of Christ, by whom it is appointed, and the observation of it prescribed unto us. Matt. xxviii. 18—20. Hence,

6. Unless men by their voluntary choice and consent, out of a sense of their duty unto the authority of Christ in his institutions, do enter into a church-state, they cannot by any other ways or means be so framed into it, as to find acceptance with God therein. 2 Cor. viii. 5. And the interpositions that are made by custom, tradition, the institutions and ordinances of men, between the consciences of them who belong, or would belong unto such a state, and the immediate authority of God, is highly obstructive of this divine order, and all the benefits of it.[a] For hence it is come to pass, that most men know neither how, nor whereby, they come to be members of this or that church, but only on this ground, that they were born where it did prevail and was accepted.

CHAP. II.

The especial original of the evangelical church-state.

Our principal concernment at present, is in the evangelical church-state; or the state of churches under the New Testament: for this is that about which there are many great and fierce contests amongst Christians, and those attended with pernicious consequents and effects. What is the original, what is the nature, what is the use and power, what is the end of the churches, or any church, what is the duty of men in it and towards it, is the subject of various contests, and the principal occasion of all the distractions that are at this day in the Christian world: for the greatest part of those who judge themselves obliged to take care and order about these things, having

[a] See discourse of Evangelical Love, p. 58. [Works, vol. xxi. pp. 37, 38.]

interwoven their own secular interests and advantages into such a church-state as is meet and suited to preserve and promote them; supposing πορισμὸν εἶναῖ τὴν εὐσέβειαν, or that religion may be made a trade for outward advantage; they do openly seek the destruction of all those, who will not comply with that church, form, and order, that they have framed unto themselves. Moreover, from men's various conceptions and suitable practices, about this church-state, is advantage and occasion taken to charge each other with schism, and all sorts of evils which are supposed to ensue thereon. Wherefore, although I design all possible brevity, and only to declare those principles of truth, wherein we may safely repose our faith and practice, avoiding as much as possibly I can, and the subject will allow, the handling of those things in a way of controversy with others; yet somewhat more than ordinary diligence is required unto the true stating of this important concernment of our religion. And that which we shall first inquire into, is the special original and authoritative constitution of this church-state. Wherefore,

1. The church-state of the New Testament doth not less relate unto, and receive force from, the light or law of nature, than any other state of the church whatever. Herein, as unto its general nature, its foundation is laid. What that directs unto may receive new enforcements by revelation, but changed, or altered, or abolished, it cannot be. Wherefore there is no need of any new express institution, of what is required by that light and law in all churches and societies for the worship of God, but only an application of it unto present occasions, and the present state of the church, which hath been various. And it is merely from a spirit of contention, that some call on us or others, to produce express testimony or institution for every circumstance in the practice of religious duties in the church; and on a supposed failure herein, to conclude, that they have power themselves to institute and ordain such ceremonies as they think meet, under a pretence of their being circumstances of worship: for as the directive light of nature is sufficient to guide us in these things, so the obligation of the church unto it, makes all stated additions to be useless, as on other accounts they are noxious. Such things as these are the times and seasons

of church assemblies, the order and decency wherein all things are to be transacted in them, the bounding of them as unto the number of their members, and places of habitation, so as to answer the ends of their institution; the multiplication of churches when the number of believers exceeds the proportion capable of edification in such societies; what especial advantages are to be made use of, in the order and worship of the church; such as are methods in preaching, translations and tunes of psalms in singing, continuance in public duties, and the like; the things themselves being divinely instituted are capable of such general directions in and by the light of nature, as may, with ordinary Christian prudence, be on all occasions applied unto the use and practice of the church. To forsake these directions, and instead of them to invent ways, modes, forms, and ceremonies of our own, which the things whereunto they are applied and made use of in, do no way call for, require, or own (as it is with all humanly invented stated ceremonies); and thereon by laws and canons to determine their precise observation at all times and seasons to be one and the same, which is contrary to the very nature of the circumstances of such acts and duties, as they are applied unto: their use, in the mean time, unto the general end of edification, being as indemonstrable as their necessity unto the duties whereunto they are annexed is also; it is that which hath no warranty either from divine authority or Christian prudence.

This respect of the gospel church-state unto the light of nature, the apostle demonstrates in his frequent appeals unto it, in things that belong unto church-order. 1 Cor. vii. 29. 33. ix. 7. xi. 14—16. xiv. 8—11. 32, 33. 40. And the like is done in sundry other places. And the reasons of it are evident.

2. But such is the especial nature and condition of the evangelical church-state; such the relation of it unto the person and mediation of Jesus Christ, with all things thereon depending; such the nature of that especial honour and glory which God designs unto himself therein (things that the light of nature can give no guidance unto, nor direction about); and moreover so different and distant from all that was before ordained in any other church-state, are the ways, means, and duties of divine worship prescribed in it, that it

must have a peculiar, divine institution of its own, to evidence that it is from heaven, and not from men. The present state of the church, under the New Testament, the apostle calls τελείωσις, Heb. vii. 11. Its perfection, its consummation, that perfect state which God designed unto it in this world. And he denies that it could be brought into that state by the law, or any of the divine institutions that belonged thereunto. Heb. vii. 19. ix. 9. x. 1. And we need go no farther, we need no other argument to prove, that the gospel church-state, as unto its especial nature, is founded in a peculiar divine institution. For it hath a τελείωσις, a perfect consummate state which the law could not bring it unto, though itself, its ordinances of worship, its rule and policy, were all of divine institution. And herein doth its excellency and preference above the legal church-state consist, as the apostle proves at large. To suppose that this should be given unto it, any other way but by divine authority in its institution, is to advance the wisdom and authority of men above those of God, and to render the gospel church-state a machine to be moved up and down at pleasure, to be new moulded or shaped according unto occasions, or to be turned unto any interest like the wings of a mill unto the wind.

All the dignity, honour, and perfection of the state of the church under the Old Testament, depended solely hereon, that it was in the whole and all the particulars of it, of divine institution. Hence it was glorious, that is, very excellent, as the apostle declares, 2 Cor. iii. And if the church-state of the New Testament, have not the same original, it must be esteemed to have a greater glory given unto it by the hand of men, than the other had, in that it was instituted by God himself; for a greater glory it hath, as the apostle testifieth. Neither can any man, nor dareth any man alive, to give any instance in particular, wherein there is the least defect, in the being, constitution, rule, and government of the gospel church-state, for want of divine institution; so as that it should be necessary to make a supply thereof, by the wisdom and authority of men. But these things will be more fully spoken unto, after we have declared who it is, who hath divinely instituted this church-state.

3. The name of the church under the New Testament, is capable of a threefold application, or it is taken in a three-

fold notion: as, (1.) For the catholic invisible church, or society of elect believers in the whole world, really related by faith in him, unto the Lord Jesus Christ, as their mystical head. (2.) For the whole number of visible professors in the whole world, who by baptism and the outward profession of the gospel and obedience unto Christ, are distinguished from the rest of the world. And, (3.) for such a state, as wherein the worship of God is to be celebrated in the way and manner by him appointed, and which is to be ruled by the power which he gives it, and according to the discipline which he hath ordained. Of the nature of the church under these distinct notions, with our relation unto either, or all of them, and the duties required of us thereon, I have treated fully in my discourse of Evangelical Love and Church Peace or Unity, and thither I must remit the reader. It is the church in the latter sense alone, whose original we now inquire after. And I say,

4. The original of this church-state is directly, immediately, and solely from Jesus Christ, he alone is the author, contriver, and institutor of it. When I say it is immediately and solely from him, I do not intend, that in and by his own person, or in his personal ministry here in the earth, he did absolutely and completely finish this state, exclusively unto the ministry of any others that he was pleased to make use of therein: for as he took it on himself as his own work to build his church, and that upon himself, as its foundation; so he employed his apostles to act under him and from him, in the carrying on that work unto perfection. But what was done by them, is esteemed to be done all by himself.

For, (1.) It was immediately from him that they received revelations of what did belong unto this church-state, and what was to be prescribed therein. They never did, neither jointly nor severally, once endeavour in their own wisdom, or from their own invention, or by their own authority, to add or put into this church-state, as of perpetual use, and belonging unto it as such, either less or more, any one thing greater or less whatever. It is true, they gave their advice in sundry cases of present emergencies, in and about church affairs; they gave direction for the due and orderly practice of what was revealed unto them, and exercised authority both as unto the ordination of officers, and the re-

jection of obstinate sinners from the society of all the churches; but to invent, contrive, institute, or appoint any thing in the church, and its state, which they had not by immediate revelation from Christ, they never attempted it, nor went about it. And unto this rule of proceeding, they were precisely obliged by the express words of their commission, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. This, I say, is so plainly included in the tenour of their commission, and so evident from all that is divinely recorded of their practice, that it will admit of no sober contradiction. In what others think it meet to do in this kind, we are not concerned.

(2.) The authority whereby they acted in the institution of the church in its order, whereon the consciences of all believers were obliged to submit thereunto, and to comply with it in a way of obedience, was the authority of Christ himself, acted in them and by them.[a] They everywhere disclaim any such power and authority in themselves. They pleaded that they were only stewards and ministers, not lords of the faith or obedience of the church, but helpers of its joy; yea, the servants of all the churches for Christ's sake. And hereon it follows, that what is recorded of their practice in their institution, ordering, or disposing of any thing in the church, that was to be of an abiding continuance, hath in it the obliging power of the authority of Christ himself. Wherefore, if the distinction that some make concerning the apostles, namely, that they are to be considered as apostles, or as church governors, should be allowed, as it is liable to just exceptions; yet would no advantage accrue thereby unto what is pretended from it: for as what they did, appointed, and ordered in the church for its constant observation, as apostles, they did it by immediate revelation from Christ, and in his name and authority; so what in distinction from hence, as church governors, they did or ordered, they did it only by a due application unto present occasions, of what they had received by revelation. But as they were apostles, Christ sent them, as his Father sent him; and he was so sent of the Father, as that he did stand and 'feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God;' Micah v. 4. So did they feed the sheep of

[a] 2 Cor. i. 24. iv. 5.

Christ in his strength and in the authority or majesty of his name.

5. Christ, therefore, alone is the author of the gospel church-state. And because this is the only foundation of our faith and obedience, as unto all that we are to believe, do, and practise, by virtue of that church-state, or in order thereunto, the Scripture doth not only plainly affirm it, but also declares the grounds of it, why it must be so, and whence it is so, as also, wherein his doing of it doth consist.

Three things amongst others, are eminently necessary in and unto him, who is to constitute this church-state with all that belongs thereunto. And as the Scripture doth eminently and expressly ascribe them all unto Christ, so no man nor all the men of the world, can have any such interest in them, as to render them meet for this work, or any part of it.

1. The first of these is right and title. He who institutes this church-state, must have a right and title to dispose of all men, in all their spiritual and eternal concernments, as seemeth good unto him: for unto this church-state, namely, as it is purely evangelical, no man is obliged by the law of nature, nor hath any creature power to dispose of him, into a condition whereon all his concernments, spiritual and eternal, shall depend. This right and title to the sovereign disposal of mankind, or of his church, Christ hath alone; and that upon a treble account. (1.) Of donation from the Father: he appointed him the 'heir of all things;' Heb. i. 2, 3. He gave him 'power over all flesh,' John xvii. 2. Especially he hath given unto him, and put into his absolute disposal, all those who are to be his church; ver. 6. (2.) By virtue of purchase: he hath by the price of his most precious blood, purchased them unto his own power and disposal. He purchased his church with his own blood, Acts xx. 28. which the apostle makes the ground of that care which ought to be had of it. And this is pleaded as a sufficient reason, why we should be wholly at his disposal only, and be free from any imposition of men in things spiritual. 1 Cor. vii. 23. 'Ye are bought with a price, be ye not the servants of men.' The purchase of this right and title was one great end of the principal mediatory acts of Christ. Rom. xiv. 9, 10. 'For to this end,' &c. (3.) Of conquest: for all those who were

thus to be disposed by him, were both under the power of his enemies, and were themselves enemies unto him in their minds. He could not, therefore, have a sovereign right unto their disposal, but by a double conquest; namely, first of their enemies, by his power; and then of themselves by his word, his Spirit, and his grace. And this twofold conquest of his is fully described in the Scripture.

Whereas therefore there is a disposal of the persons that are to belong unto this church-state, as unto their souls, consciences, and all the eternal concernments of them, by an indispensable moral obligation to a compliance therewithal; until men can manifest that they have such a right and title over others, and that either by the especial grant and donation of God the Father, or a purchase that they have made of them unto themselves, or conquest; they are not to be esteemed to have either right or title to institute any thing that belongs unto this church-state. And it is in vain pretended (as we shall see more afterward) that Christ indeed hath appointed this church-state in general; but that he hath appointed no particular form of churches, or their rule, but left that unto the discretion and authority of men, as they think meet, when they have outward power for their warranty. But if by these particular appointments and framings of churches with their order, men are disposed of, as unto their spiritual concernments, beyond the obligation of the light of nature or the moral law; we must yet inquire, who gave them this right and title to make this disposal of them.

2. Authority. As right and title respect the persons of men to be reduced into a new form of government, so authority respects the rules, laws, orders, and statutes to be made, prescribed, and established, whereby the privileges of this new society are conveyed, and the duties of it enjoined unto all that are taken unto it. Earthly potentates, who will dispose of men into a state and government absolutely new unto them, as unto all their temporal concernments of life, liberty, inheritances, and possessions, so as that they shall hold all of them in dependence on, and according unto the rules and laws of their new government and kingdom, must have these two things, namely, right and title unto the persons of men, which they have by conquest, or an absolute

resignation of all their interests and concerns into their disposal; and authority, thereon to constitute what order, what kind of state, rule, and government they please: without these they will quickly find their endeavours and undertakings frustrate. The gospel church-state in the nature of it, and in all the laws and constitution of it, is absolutely new, whereunto all the world are naturally foreigners and strangers. As they have no right unto it as it containeth privileges, so they have no obligation unto it as it prescribes duties; wherefore there is need of both those, right, as unto the persons of men; and authority, as unto the laws and constitution of the church, unto the framing of it. And until men can pretend unto these things, both unto this right and authority with respect unto all the spiritual and eternal concernments of the souls of others, they may do well to consider how dangerous it is to invade the right and inheritance of Christ; and leave hunting after an interest of power in the framing or forming evangelical churches, or making of laws for their rule and government.

This authority is not only ascribed unto Jesus Christ in the Scripture, but it is enclosed unto him, so as that no other can have any interest in it. See Matt. xxviii. 18. Rev. iii. 7. Isa. ix. 6, 7. By virtue hereof he is the only lawgiver of the church; James iv. 12. Isa. xxxii. 22. There is indeed a derivation of power and authority from him unto others; but it extends itself no farther, save only that they shall direct, teach, and command those whom he sends them unto, to do and observe what he hath commanded; Matt. xxviii. 20. 'He builds his own house,' and he is 'over his own house;' Heb. iii. 3—6. He both constitutes its state, and gives laws for its rule.

The disorder, the confusion, the turning of the kingdom of Christ upside down, which have ensued upon the usurpation of men, taking upon them a legislative power in and over the church, cannot easily be declared: for upon a slight pretence, no way suited or serviceable unto their ends, of the advice given, and determination made by the apostles with the elders and brethren of the church of Jerusalem, in a temporary constitution about the use of Christian liberty, the bishops of the fourth and fifth centuries took upon themselves power to make laws, canons, and constitutions for

the ordering of the government, and the rule of the church, bringing in many new institutions on a pretence of the same authority. Neither did others who followed them cease to build on their sandy foundation, until the whole frame of the church-state was altered, a new law made for its government, and a new Christ or antichrist assumed in the head of its rule by that law: for all this pretended authority of making laws and constitutions for the government of the church, issued in that sink of abominations, which they call the canon-law. Let any man but of a tolerable understanding, and freed from infatuating prejudices, but read the representation that is made of the gospel church-state, its order, rule, and government in the Scripture on the one hand, and what representation is made on the other, of a church-state, its order, rule, and government, in the canon-law, the only effect of men's assuming to themselves a legislative power with respect unto the church of Christ, if he doth not pronounce them to be contrary as light and darkness, and that by the latter the former is utterly destroyed and taken away, I shall never trust to the use of men's reason, or their honesty any more.

This authority was first usurped by synods, or councils of bishops; of what use they were at any time, to declare and give testimony unto any article of the faith, which in their days was opposed by heretics, I shall not now inquire. But as unto the exercise of the authority claimed by them to make laws and canons for the rule and government of the church, it is to be bewailed there should be such a monument left of their weakness, ambition, self-interest, and folly, as there is in what remaineth of their constitutions. Their whole endeavour in this kind was at best but the building of wood, hay, and stubble on the foundation, in whose consumption they shall suffer loss, although they be saved themselves. But in making of laws to bind the whole church, in and about things useless and trivial, no way belonging to the religion taught us by Jesus Christ, in and for the establishment or increase of their own power, jurisdiction, authority, and rule, with the extent and bounds of their several dominions; in and for the constitution of new frames and states of churches, and new ways of the government of them; in the appointment of new modes, rites, and ceremo-

nies of divine worship, with the confusions that ensued thereon, in mutual animosities, fightings, divisions, schisms, and anathematisms, to the horrible scandal of Christian religion, they ceased not until they had utterly destroyed all the order, rule, and government of the church of Christ, yea, the very nature of it, and introduced into its room, a carnal worldly church-state and rule, suited unto the interests of covetous, ambitious, and tyrannical prelates. The most of them indeed knew not for whom they wrought, in providing materials for that Babel which by an hidden skill in a mystery of iniquity, was raised out of their provisions: for after they were hewed, and carved, shaped, formed, and gilded, the pope appeared in the head of it, as it were with those words of his mouth, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?' This was the fatal event of men's invading the right of Christ, and claiming an interest in authority to give laws to the church. This therefore is absolutely denied by us, namely, that any men, under what pretence or name soever, have any right or authority to constitute any new frame, or order of the church, to make any laws of their own for its rule or government, that should oblige the disciples of Christ in point of conscience unto their observation. That there is nothing in this assertion, that should in the least impeach the power of magistrates, with reference unto the outward, civil, and political concerns of the church, or the public profession of religion within their territories; nothing that should take off from the just authority of the lawful guides of the church, in ordering, appointing, and commanding the observation of all things in them, according to the mind of Christ, shall be afterward declared.' In these things, the 'Lord is our judge, the Lord is our statute-maker, the Lord is our king, he will save us.'

It is then but weakly pleaded, that seeing the magistrate can appoint or command nothing in religion, that God hath forbidden; nor is there any need that he should appoint or command what God hath already appointed and commanded; if so be he may not by law command such things in the church, as before were neither commanded nor forbidden, but indifferent, which are the proper field of his eccle-

siastical, legislative power, then hath he no power nor authority about religion at all: that is, if he hath not the same and a co-ordinate power with God or Christ, he hath none at all. One of the best arguments that can be used for the power of the magistrate, in things ecclesiastical, is taken from the approved example of the good kings under the Old Testament. But they thought it honour enough unto them, and their duty, to see and take care, that the things which God had appointed and ordained should be diligently observed by all those concerned therein, both priests and people, and to destroy what God had forbidden. To appoint any thing of themselves, to make that necessary in the church and the worship thereof, which God had not made so, they never esteemed it to be in their power, or to belong unto their duty. When they did any thing of that nature, and thereby made any additions unto the outward worship of God, not before commanded, they did it by immediate revelation from God, and so by divine authority. 1 Chron. xxviii. 19. And it is left as a brand on those that were wicked, not only that they commanded and made statutes for the observation of what God had forbidden, Mic. vi. 16. but also that they commanded and appointed what God had not appointed. 1 Kings xii. 32, 33. And it will be found at last to be honour enough to the greatest potentate under heaven to take care, that what Christ hath appointed in his church and worship be observed, without claiming a power like unto that of the Most High, to give laws unto the church, for the observation of things found out and invented by themselves or other men.

Of the same nature is the other part of their plea against this denial of a legislative power in men, with respect unto the constitution of the evangelical church-state, or the ordaining of any thing to be observed in it, that Christ hath not appointed. For it is said, that if this be allowed, as all the dignity, power, and honour of the governors of the church, will be rejected or despised; so all manner of confusion and disorder will be brought into the church itself. For how can it otherwise be, when all power of law-making, in the preservation of the dignity of the rulers and order of the church, is taken away. And therefore we see, it was the wisdom of the church in former ages, that all the principal

laws and canons that they made in their councils, or otherwise, were designed unto the exaltation and preservation of the dignity of church rulers; wherefore take this power away, and you will bring in all confusion into the church.

Ans. 1. They do not in my judgment sufficiently think of whom, and of what they speak, who plead after this manner. For the substance of the plea is; That if the church have its whole frame, constitution, order, rule, and government from Christ alone, though men should faithfully discharge their duty, in doing and observing all what he hath commanded, there would be nothing in it but disorder and confusion: whether this becomes that reverence which we ought to have of him, or be suited unto that faithfulness and wisdom which is particularly ascribed unto him in the constitution and ordering of his church, is not hard to determine, and the truth of it shall be afterward demonstrated.

2. As unto the dignity and honour of the rulers of the church, the subject of so many ecclesiastical laws, they are, in the first place, to be desired themselves, to remember the example of Christ himself in his personal ministry here on earth, Matt. xx. 28. 'Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many:' with the rule prescribed by him thereon, ver. 25—27. 'But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever shall be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:' with the occasion of the instruction given therein unto his apostles, ver. 24. 'And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren:' as also the injunction given them by the apostle Peter, on whom, for their own advantage, some would fasten a monarchy over the whole church; 1 Epist. v. 2, 3. 'Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage; but being ensamples to the flock:' and the blessed expressions of the apostolical state by Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 1. 'Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of

the mysteries of God;' 2 Cor. i. 24. 'Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy;' 2 Cor. iv. 5. 'For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake:' it may prepare their minds for the right management of that honour which is their due. For (2.) There is in and by the constitution of Christ, and his express laws, an honour and respect due unto those church guides which he hath appointed, abiding in the duties which he requireth. If men had not been weary of apostolical simplicity and humility, if they could have contented themselves with the honour and dignity annexed unto their office, and work by Christ himself; they had never entertained pleasing dreams of thrones, pre-eminencies, chief sees, secular grandeur and power, nor framed so many laws and canons about these things, turning the whole rule of the church into a worldly empire. For such it was, that as of all the popes which ever dwelt at Rome, there was never any pretended or acted a greater zeal for the rule and government of the church, by the laws and canons that it had made for that end, than Gregory the VIIth; so if ever there were any antichrist in the world (as there are many antichrists), he was one. His Luciferian pride, his trampling on all Christian kings and potentates, his horrible tyranny over the consciences of all Christians, his abominable dictates asserting of his own god-like sovereignty, his requiring all men, on the pain of damnation, to be sinful subjects to God and Peter, that is, himself, which his own acts and epistles are filled withal, do manifest both who and what he was. Unto that issue did this power of law, or canon making, for the honour and dignity of church rulers, at length arrive.

3. Let the constitution of the church by Jesus Christ abide and remain, let the laws for its rule, government, and worship, which he hath recorded in the Scripture be diligently observed by them whose duty it is to take care about them, both to observe them themselves, and to teach others so to do, and we know full well, there will be no occasion given or left unto the least confusion or disorder in the church. But if men will be froward, and because they may not make laws themselves, or keep the statutes made by others, will neglect the due observation and execution of

what Christ hath ordained; or will deny, that we may and ought, in and for the due observation of his laws, to make use of the inbred light of nature and rules of common prudence (the use and exercise of both which are included and enjoined in the commands of Christ, in that he requires a compliance with them in the way of obedience, which we cannot perform without them), I know of no relief against the perpetuity of our differences about these things. But after so much scorn and contempt hath been cast upon that principle, that it is not lawful to observe any thing in the rule of the church, or divine worship, in a constant way by virtue of any human canons or laws, that is not prescribed in the Scripture, if we could prevail with men to give us one single instance, which they would abide by, wherein the rules and institutions of Christ are so defective, as that without their canonical additions, order cannot be observed in the church, nor the worship of God be duly performed; and it shall be diligently attended unto. Allow the general rules given us in Scripture, for church-order and worship, to be applied unto all proper occasions and circumstances, with particular, positive, divine precepts: allow also that the apostles, in what they did and acted in the constitution and ordering of the churches and their worship, did and acted it in the name and by the authority of Christ, as also that there needs no other means of affecting and obliging our consciences in these things, but only that the mind and will of Christ be intimated and made known unto us, though not in the form of a law given and promulgated, which, I suppose, no men of sober minds or principles can disallow; and then give an instance of such a deficiency, as that mentioned in the institutions of Christ, and the whole difference in this matter, will be rightly stated, and not else. But to return from this digression.

The Scripture doth not only ascribe this authority unto Christ alone, but it giveth instances of his use and exercise thereof, which comprise all that is necessary unto the constitution and ordering of his churches and the worship of them. (1.) He 'buildeth his own house;' Heb. iii. 3. (2.) He appointeth offices for rule in his churches, and officers; 1 Cor. xii. 5. Rom. xii. 6—8. (3.) He gives gifts for the administrations of the church; Eph. iv. 11—13. 1 Cor.

xi. 12. (4.) He gives power and authority unto them that are to minister and rule in the church, &c. which things must be afterward spoken unto.

3. As unto this constitution of the gospel church-state, the Scripture assigneth in an especial manner, faithfulness unto the Lord Christ; Heb. iii. 3—5. This power is originally in God himself; it belongs unto him alone, as the great sovereign of all his creatures: unto Christ, as mediator, it was given by the Father, and the whole of it intrusted with him. Hence it follows, that in the execution of it he hath respect unto the mind and will of God, as unto what he would have done and ordered, with respect whereunto this power was committed unto him. And here his faithfulness takes place, exerted in the revelation of the whole mind of God in this matter, instituting, appointing, and commanding all that God would have so ordained, and nothing else. And what can any man do, that cometh after the king.

Hereunto there is added on the same account, the consideration of his wisdom, his love, and care for the good of his church, which in him were ineffable and inimitable. By all these things was he fitted for his office, and the work that was reserved for him, so as that he might in all things have the pre-eminency. And this was to make the last and only full, perfect, complete revelation of the mind and will of God, as unto the state, order, faith, obedience, and worship of the church. There was no perfection in any of these things, until he took this work in hand. Wherefore it may justly be supposed, that he hath so perfectly stated and established all things concerning his churches and worship therein, being the last divine hand, that was to be put to this work; and this his hand; Heb. i. 2, 3. that whatever is capable of a law or a constitution for the use of the church at all times, or is needful for his disciples to observe, is revealed, declared, and established by him. And in this persuasion I shall abide, until I see better fruits and effects of the interposition of the wisdom and authority of men, unto the same ends which he designed, than as yet I have been able, in any age, to observe.

The substance of the things pleaded may, for the greater

evidence of their truth, be reduced unto the ensuing heads or propositions:

1. Every church-state that hath an especial institution of its own, giving its especial kind, supposeth and hath respect unto the law and light of nature, requiring and directing in general those things which belong unto the being, order, and preservation of such societies as that is. That there ought to be societies, wherein men voluntarily join together for the solemn performance of divine worship and joint walking in obedience before God; that these societies ought to use such means for their own peace and order as the light of nature directs unto; that where many have a common interest, they ought to consult in common for the due management of it, with other things of the like importance, are evident dictates of this light and law. Now whatever church-state may be superinduced by divine institution, yet this light and law, in all their evident dictates, continue their obliging power in and over the minds of men, and must do so eternally. Wherefore, things that belong hereunto need no new institution in any church-state whatever; but yet,

2. Whatever is required by the light of nature in such societies as churches, as useful unto their order, and conducing unto their end, is a divine institution. The Lord Christ in the institution of gospel churches, their state, order, rule, and worship, doth not require of his disciples, that in their observance of his appointments they should cease to be men, or forego the use and exercise of their rational abilities, according to the rule of that exercise, which is the light of nature. Yea, because the rules and directions are in this case to be applied unto things spiritual and of mere revelation, he giveth wisdom, prudence, and understanding to make that application in a due manner, unto those whom the guidance and rule of the church is committed: wherefore, as unto all things which the light of nature directs us unto, with respect unto the observation of the duties prescribed by Christ in and unto the church, we need no other institution but that of the use of the especial spiritual wisdom and prudence, which the Lord Christ gives unto his church for that end.

3. There are in the Scripture general rules directing us in the application of natural light, unto such a determination of all circumstances in the acts of church-rule and worship, as are sufficient for their performance decently and in order. Wherefore, as was said before, it is utterly in vain and useless, to demand express institution of all the circumstances belonging unto the government, order, rule, and worship of the church; or for the due improvement of things in themselves indifferent unto its edification, as occasion shall require. Nor are they capable to be any otherwise stated, but as they lie in the light of nature and spiritual prudence directed by general rules of Scripture.

These things being premised, our principal assertion is, 'That Christ alone is the author, institutor, and appointer, in a way of authority and legislation, of the gospel church-state, its order, rule, and worship, with all things constantly and perpetually belonging thereunto; or necessary to be observed therein. What is not so, is of men, and not from heaven; this is that which we have proved in general, and shall farther particularly confirm in our progress. Hence,

6. There is no spiritual use nor benefit of any church-state, nor of any thing therein performed, but what, on the part of men, consists in acts of obedience unto the authority of Christ. If in any thing we do of this nature, we cannot answer that inquiry, which God directs in this case to be made, namely, 'why we do this or that thing;' Exod. xii. 25—27. with this, that it is because Christ hath required it of us, we do not acknowledge him the Lord over his own house, nor hear him as the Son. Nor is there any act of power to be put forth in the rule of the church, but in them by whom it is exerted it is an act of obedience unto Christ, or it is a mere usurpation. All church-power is nothing but a faculty or ability to obey the commands of Christ in such a way and manner as he hath appointed. For it is his constitution, that the administration of his solemn worship in the church, and the rule of it, as unto the observance of his commands, should be committed unto some persons set apart unto that end, according unto his appointment. This is all their authority, all that they have of order or jurisdiction, or by any other ways whereby they are pleased to express it. And where there is any gospel administration,

any act of rule or government in the church, which those that perform it do not give an evidence that they do it in obedience unto Christ, it is null as unto any obligation on the consciences of his disciples. The neglect hereof in the world, wherein many in the exercise of church-discipline, or any acts that belong unto the rule of it, think of nothing but their own offices, whereunto such powers are annexed, by human laws and canons, as enable them to act in their own names, without designing obedience unto Christ in all that they do, or to make a just representation of his authority, wisdom, and love thereby, is ruinous unto church-order and rule.

7. There is no legislative power in and over the church, as unto its form, order and worship, left unto any of the sons of men, under any qualification whatever. For,

(1.) There are none of them, who have an interest in those rights, qualifications, and endowments, which are necessary unto an investiture into such a legislative power. For what was given and granted unto Christ himself unto this end, that he might be the lawgiver of the church, must be found also in them, who pretend unto any interest therein. Have they any of them a right and title unto a disposal of the persons of believers in what way they please, as unto their spiritual and eternal concernments? Have they sovereign authority over all things to change their moral nature; to give them new uses and significations, to make things necessary that in themselves are indifferent, and to order all those things by sovereign authority in laws obliging the consciences of men? And the like may be said of his personal qualifications, of faithfulness, wisdom, love, and care, which are ascribed unto him in this work of giving laws unto his churches, as he was the Lord over his own house.

(2.) The event of the assumption of this legislative power under the best pretence that can be given unto it, namely, in councils or great assemblies of bishops and prelates, sufficiently demonstrates how dangerous a thing it is for any man to be engaged in. For it issued at length in such a constitution of churches, and such laws for the government of them, as exalted the canon law into the room of the Scripture, and utterly destroyed the true nature of the church of Christ, and all the discipline required therein.

(3.) Such an assumption is derogatory unto the glory of Christ, especially as unto his faithfulness in and over the house of God, wherein he is compared unto and preferred above Moses, Heb. iii. 3—6. Now the faithfulness of Moses consisted in this, that he did and appointed all things according to the pattern shewed him in the mount; that is, all whatever it was the will of God to be revealed and appointed for the constitution, order, rule, and worship of his church, and nothing else. But it was the will of God, that there should be all those things in the gospel church-state also, or else why do men contend about them? And if this were the will of God, if they were not all revealed, appointed, prescribed, legalized by Christ, where is his faithfulness in answer to that of Moses? But no instance can be given of any defect in his institutions, that needs any supplement to be made by the best of men, as unto the end of constituting a church-state, order, and rule, with rites of worship in particular.

(4.) How it is derogatory unto the glory of the Scripture, as unto its perfection, shall be elsewhere declared.

8. There is no more required to give authority obliging the consciences of all that do believe, unto any institution, or observation of duty, or acts of rule in the church, but only that it is made evident in the Scripture to be the mind and will of Christ. It is not necessary that every thing of this nature should be given out unto us in form of a law or precise command, in express words. It is the mind and will of Christ that immediately affects the consciences of believers unto obedience, by what way or means soever the knowledge of it be communicated unto them in the Scripture, either by express words, or by just consequence from what is so expressed. Wherefore,

9. The example and practice of the apostles in the erection of churches, in the appointment of officers and rulers in them, in directions given for their walking, order, administration of censures and all other holy things, are a sufficient indication of the mind and will of Christ about them. We do not say, that in themselves they are institutions and appointments, but they infallibly declare what is so, or the mind of Christ concerning those things. Nor can this be

questioned without a denial of their infallibility, faithfulness, and divine authority.

10. The assertion of some, that the apostles took their pattern for the state and rule of the churches, and as unto divers rites of worship, from the synagogues of the Jews, their institutions, orders, and rules, not those appointed by Moses, but such as themselves had found out and ordained; is both temerarious and untrue. In the pursuit of such bold conjectures, one of late hath affirmed that Moses took most of his laws and ceremonies from the Egyptians; whereas it is much more likely that many of them were given on purpose to alienate the people by prohibitions, from any compliance with the Egyptians, or any other nation, whereof Maimonides in his 'Mene Nebuchim' gives us sundry instances. This assertion I say is rash and false. For, (1) As unto the instances given for its confirmation, who shall assure us that they were then in use and practice in the synagogues when the apostles gave rules unto the churches of the New Testament. We have no record of theirs, not one word in all the world, of what was their way and practice, but what is at least two hundred and fifty years younger and later than the writings of the New Testament; and in the first of their writings as in them that follow, we have innumerable things asserted to have been the traditions and practices of their forefathers, from the days of Moses, which we know to be utterly false. At that time when they undertook to compose a new religion out of their pretended traditions, partly by the revolt of many apostates from Christianity unto them, especially of the Ebionites and Nazarenes, and partly by their own study and observation, coming to the knowledge of sundry things in the gospel churches, their order and worship, they took them in as their own; undeniable instances may be given hereof. (2) Wherein there is a real coincidence, between what was ordained by the apostles and what was practised by the Jews, it is in things which the light of nature and the general rules of the Scripture do direct unto. And it is dishonourable unto the apostles and the Spirit of Christ in them, to think, or say, that in such things they took their pattern from the Jews, or made them their example. Surely the

apostles took not the pattern and example for the institution of excommunication from the Druids, among whom there was some things that did greatly resemble it, so far as it hath its foundation in the light of nature.

CHAP. III.

The continuation of a church-state and of churches unto the end of the world; what are the causes of it, and whereon it depends.

THAT there was a peculiar church-state instituted and appointed by Christ, and his apostles, acting in his name and authority, with the infallible guidance of his Spirit, hath been declared. But it may be yet farther inquired, whether this church-state be still continued by divine authority, or whether it ceased not together with the apostles by whom it was erected.

There was a church-state under the Old Testament solemnly erected by God himself. And although it was not to be absolutely perpetual or everlasting, but was to continue only unto the time of reformation, yet unto that time its continuation was secured, in the causes and means of it.

The causes of the continuation of this church-state unto its appointed period were two.

1. The promise of God unto Abraham, that he would keep and preserve his seed in covenant with him, until he should be the heir of the world, and the father of many nations, in the coming of Christ, whereunto this church-state was subservient. 2. The law of God itself, and the institutions thereof, which God appointed to be observed in all their generations, calling the covenant, the statutes and laws of it, perpetual and everlasting; that is, never to cease, to be abrogated or disannulled, until by his own sovereign authority he would utterly change and take away that whole church-state, with all that belonged unto its constitution and preservation.

The means of its continuance were three. 1. Carnal generation, and that on a twofold account. For there were two constituent parts of that church, the priests, and the

people; the continuation of each of them depended on the privilege of carnal generation. For the priests were to be all of the family of Aaron, and the people of the seed of Abraham by the other heads of tribes, which gave them both their foundation in, and right unto, this church-state; and hereunto were annexed all the laws concerning the integrity, purity, and legitimacy of the priests, with the certainty of their pedigree. 2. Circumcision; the want whereof was a bar against any advantage by the former privilege of generation from those two springs; and hereby others also might be added unto the church, though never with a capacity of the priesthood. 3. The separation of the people from the rest of the world, by innumerable divine ordinances, making their coalition with them impossible.

From these causes and by these means it was, that the church-state under the Old Testament was preserved unto its appointed season. Neither the outward calamities that befel the nation, nor the sins of the generality of the people, could destroy this church-state, but it continued its right and exercise unto the time of reformation. And if it be not so, if there be not causes and means of the infallible continuance of the gospel church-state unto the consummation of all things, the time expressly allotted unto their continuance; then was the work of Moses more honourable, more powerful and effectual, in the constitution of the church state under the Old Testament, than that of Christ in the constitution of the New. For that work and those institutions which had an efficacy in them for their own infallible continuation, and of the church thereby throughout all generations, must be more noble and honourable, than those which cannot secure their own continuance, nor the being and state of the church thereon depending. Nothing can be more derogatory unto the glory of the wisdom and power of Christ, nor of his truth and faithfulness, than such an imagination. We shall therefore inquire into the causes and means of the continuation of this church-state, and therein shew the certainty of it; as also disprove that which by some is pretended as the only means thereof, when indeed it is the principal argument against their perpetual continuation, that can be made use of.

1. The essence and nature of the church instituted by

the authority of Jesus Christ, was always the same from the beginning, that it continues still to be. But as unto its outward form and order it had a double state; and it was necessary that so it should have, from the nature of the thing itself. For, (1.) The church may be considered in its relation unto those extraordinary officers or rulers, whose office and power was antecedent unto the church, as that by virtue whereof, it was to be called and erected. (2.) With respect unto ordinary officers, unto whose office and power the church essentially considered was antecedent; for their whole work and duty, as such, is conversant about the church; and the object is antecedent unto all acts about it.

The first state has ceased, nor can it be continued. For these officers were constituted, (1.) By an immediate call from Christ, as was Paul, Gal. i. 1, 2. which none now are, nor have been since the decease of them who were so called at first. (2.) By extraordinary gifts and power, which Christ doth not continue to communicate. (3.) By divine inspiration and infallible guidance, both in preaching the word, and appointing things necessary in the churches, which none now pretend unto. (4.) By extensive commission, giving them power towards all the world for their conversion, and over all churches for their edification. Of these officers, in their distinction into apostles and evangelists, with their call, gifts, power, and work, I have treated at large in my discourse of Spiritual Gifts. The state and condition of the church, with respect unto them has utterly ceased; and nothing can be more vain than to pretend any succession unto them, in the whole or any part of their office, unless men can justify their claim unto it by any or all of these things which concurred unto it in the apostles, which they cannot do.

But it doth not hence follow, that the church-state instituted by Christ did fail thereon, or doth now so fail; because it is impossible that these apostles should have any successors in their office, or the discharge of it. For by the authority of the Lord Christ, the church was to be continued under ordinary officers, without the call, gifts, or power of the others that were to cease. Under these, the church-state was no less divine than under the former. For there were two things in it: (1.) That the offices themselves

were of the appointment of Christ: and if they were not so, we confess the divine right of the church-state would have ceased. The office of the apostles and evangelists was to cease, as hath been declared; and it did cease actually, in that Christ after them did call no more unto that office, nor provided any way or means whereby any one should be made partaker of it: and for any to pretend a succession in office, or any part of their office, without any of those things which did constitute it, is extreme presumption. It is therefore granted, that if there were not other offices appointed by the authority of Christ, it had not been in the power of man to make or appoint any unto that purpose, and the church-state itself must have ceased. But this he he hath done, Eph. iv. 11, 12. 1 Cor. xii. 28. (2.) That persons were to be interested in these offices according unto the way and means by him prescribed; which were not such as depended on his own immediate extraordinary actings, as it was with the former sort, but such as consisted in the church's acting according to his law, and in obedience unto his commands.

This church-state was appointed by the authority of Christ. The direction which he gave in his own person for addresses unto the church in case of scandal, which is an obliging institution for all ages, Matt. xviii. 17—20. proves that he had appointed a church-state that should abide through them all. And when there was a church planted at Jerusalem, there were not only apostles in it, according to its first state, but elders also, which respected its second state that was approaching. Acts xv. 23. The apostles being in office before that church-state, the elders ordained in it. So chap. xi. 30. And 'the apostles ordained elders in every church;' Acts xiv. 22. Tit. i. 5. 1 Tim. v. 17. whom they affirmed to be made so by the Holy Ghost; Acts xx. 28. The churches to whom the apostle Paul wrote his epistles, were such all of them under the rule of ordinary officers; Phil. i. 1. Rules and laws are given for their ordination in all ages; Titus i. 1 Tim. iii. and the Lord Christ treateth from heaven with his churches in this state and order; Rev. i. ii. iii. He hath promised his presence with them unto the consummation of all things; Matt. xxviii. 20. xviii. 20. and assigned them their duty until his

second coming; 1 Cor. xi. 26. with other evidences of the same truth innumerable.

Our inquiry therefore is, whereon the continuation of this church-state unto the end of the world doth depend; what are the causes; what are the means of it; whence it becomes infallible and necessary. I must only premise, that our present consideration is not so much 'de facto,' as unto what hath fallen out in the world unto our knowledge and observation, but 'de jure,' or of a right unto this continuation. And this is such as makes it not only lawful for such a church-state to be, but requires also from all the disciples of Christ in a way of duty, that it be always in actual existence. Hereby there is a warrant given unto all believers, at all times to gather themselves into such a church-state, and a duty imposed on them so to do.

The reasons and causes appointing and securing this continuation are of various sorts, the principal whereof are these that follow:

1. The supreme cause hereof, is the Father's grant of a perpetual kingdom in this world unto Jesus Christ, the mediator and head of the church. Psal. lxxii. 5. 7. 15—17. Isa. ix. 7. Zech. vi. 13. This grant of the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ pleaded as his warranty for the foundation and continuation of the church. Matt. xxviii. 17—20. This everlasting kingdom of Jesus Christ, given him by the irrevocable grant of the Father, may be considered three ways: (1.) As unto the real subjects of it, true believers, which are the object of the internal spiritual power and rule of Christ. Of these it is necessary, by virtue of this grant and divine constitution of the kingdom of Christ, that in every age there should be some in the world, and those perhaps no small multitude; but such as the internal rule over them may be rightly and honourably termed a kingdom: for as that which formally makes them such subjects of Christ, gives them no outward appearance or visibility; so if in a time of the universal prevalency of idolatry, there were seven thousand of these in the small kingdom of Israel, undiscerned and invisible unto the most eagle-eyed prophet who lived in their days; what number may we justly suppose to have been within the limits of Christ's dominions which is the whole world, in the worst, darkest, most profli-

gate, and idolatrous times, that have passed over the earth since the first erection of this kingdom? This, therefore, is a fundamental article of our faith; that by virtue of this grant of the Father, Christ ever had, hath, and will have in all ages, some, yea a multitude, that are the true, real, spiritual subjects of his kingdom. Neither the power of Satan, nor the rage or fury of the world, nor the accursed apostacy of many, or of all visible churches from the purity and holiness of his laws can hinder, but that the church of Christ in this sense must have a perpetual continuation in this world. Matt. xvi. 18.

(2.) It may be considered with respect unto the outward visible profession of subjection and obedience unto him, and the observation of his laws. This also belongs unto the kingdom granted him of his Father. He was to have a kingdom in this world, though it be not of this world. He was to have it not only as unto its being, but as unto its glory. The world and the worst of men therein, were to see and know that he hath still a kingdom and multitude of subjects depending on his rule. See the constitution of it, Dan. vii. 13, 14. Wherefore it is from hence indispensably and absolutely necessary, that there should at all times, and in all ages, be ever an innumerable multitude of them who openly profess faith in Christ Jesus, and subjection of conscience unto his laws and commands. So it hath always been, so it is, and shall for ever be, in this world. And those who would on the one hand confine the church of Christ, in this notion of it, unto any one church falling under a particular denomination, as the church of Rome, which may utterly fail; or are ready, on the other hand, upon the supposed or real errors or miscarriages of them, or any of them, who make this profession, to cast them out of their thoughts and affections as those that belong not unto the kingdom or the church of Christ, are not only injurious unto them, but enemies unto the glory and honour of Christ.

(3.) This grant of the Father may be considered with respect unto particular churches or congregations; and the end of these churches may be twofold: [1.] That believers, as they are internal, spiritual, real subjects of Christ's kingdom, may together act that faith and those graces whereby

they are so, unto his glory. I say it is, that true believers may, together and in society, act all those graces of the Spirit of Christ, wherein both as unto faculty and exercise, their internal spiritual subjection unto Christ doth consist. And, as this is that whereby the glory of Christ in this world doth most eminently consist, namely, in the joint exercise in the faith and love of true believers; so it is a principal means of the increase and augmentation of those graces in themselves, or their spiritual edfication. And from this especial end of these churches it follows, that those who are members of them, or belong to them, ought to be saints by calling, or such as are endued with those spiritual principles and graces in whose exercise Christ is to be glorified; and where they are not so, the principal end of their constitution is lost. So are those churches to be made up fundamentally and materially of those who in their single capacity are members of the church catholic invisible. [2.] Their second end is, that those who belong unto the church and kingdom of Christ under the second consideration, as visibly professing subjection unto the rule of Christ and faith in him, may express that subjection in acts and duties of his worship, in the observance of his laws and commands, according unto his mind and will. For this alone can be done in particular churches, be they of what sort they will, whereof we shall speak afterward. Hence it follows that it belongs unto the foundation of these particular churches, that those who join in them do it on a public profession of faith in Christ, and obedience unto him, without which this end of them also is lost. Those, I say, who make a visible profession of the name of Christ and their subjection unto him, have no way to express it regularly and according to his mind, but in these particular churches, wherein alone those commandments of his, in whose observance our profession consisteth, do take place; being such societies as wherein the solemn duties of his worship are performed, and his rule or discipline is exercised.

Wherefore this state of the church also, without which both the other are imperfect, belongs unto the grant of the Father, whereby a perpetual continuation of it is secured. Nor is it of any weight to object, that such hath been the

alterations of the state of all churches in the world, such the visible apostacy of many of them unto false worship and idolatry, and of others into a worldly carnal conversation, with vain traditions innumerable, that it cannot be apprehended where there were any true churches of this kind preserved and continued, but that there were an actual intercision of them all. For I answer, (1.) No individual man, nay, no company of men that come together, can give a certain account of what is done in all the world, and every place of it, where the name of Christ is professed; so as that what is affirmed of the state of all churches universally, is mere conjecture and surmise. (2.) There is so great a readiness in most to judge the church-state of others, because in some things they agree not in judgment or practice with what they conceive to belong thereunto, as obstructs a right judgment herein. And it hath risen of late unto such a degree of frenzy, that some deny peremptorily the church-state, and consequently the salvation of all that have not diocesan bishops. Alas! that poor men, who are known to others, whether they are unto themselves or no, what is their office, and what is their discharge of it, should once think that the being and salvation of all churches should depend on them, and such as they are. Yea, some of the men of this persuasion, that Christians cannot be saved unless they comply with diocesan bishops, do yet grant that heathens may be saved without the knowledge of Christ. (3.) Whatever defect there hath been 'de facto' in the constitution of these churches, and the celebration of divine worship in any places or ages whatever, it will not prove that there was a total failure of them, much less a discontinuation of the right of believers to reform and erect them according unto the mind of Christ.

It is hence evident that the perpetual continuation of the church-state instituted by Christ under the gospel, depends originally on the grant of the kingdom unto him by his Father, with his faithfulness in that grant, and his almighty power to make it good. And they do but deceive themselves and trouble others, who think of suspending this continuation, on mean and low conditions of their own framing.

2. The continuation of this church-state depends on the promise of Christ himself to preserve and continue it. He

hath assured us that he will so build his church on the rock, 'that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;' Matt. xvi. 18. Under what consideration soever the church is here firstly intended, the whole state of it as before described, is included in the promise: if the gates of hell do prevail either against the faith of sincere believers, or the catholic profession of that faith, or the expression of that profession in the duties and ordinances to be observed in particular churches, the promise fails and is of no effect.

3. It depends on the word or law of Christ, which gives right and title unto all believers to congregate themselves in such a church-state, with rules and commands for their so doing. Suppose, (1.) That there are a number of believers, of the disciples of Christ in any such place, as wherein they can assemble and unite themselves or join together in a society for the worship of God; (2.) That they are as yet in no church-state, nor do know or own any power of men that can put them into that state; I say, the institution of this church-state by the authority of Christ, his commands unto his disciples, to observe therein whatever he hath commanded, and the rules he hath given whereby such a church-state is to be erected, what officers are to preside therein, and what other duties belong thereunto, is warranty sufficient for them to join themselves in such a state. Who shall make it unlawful for the disciples of Christ to obey the commands of their Lord and Master? Who shall make it lawful for them to neglect what he requires at any time? Wherever therefore men have the word of the Scripture to teach them their duty, it is lawful for them to comply with all the commands of Christ contained therein. And whereas there are many privileges and powers accompanying this church-state, and those who are interested therein are, as such, the especial object of many divine promises; this word and law of Christ doth make a conveyance of them all unto those who in obedience unto his institutions and commands do enter into that state, by the way and means that he hath appointed. Whilst we hear him, according to the reiterated direction given us from heaven; whilst we do and observe all that he hath commanded us, we need not fear that promised presence of his with us, which brings along with it all church-power and privileges also. Wherefore this state can have

no intercision, but on a supposition that there are none in the world who are willing to obey the commands of Christ, which utterly overthrows the very being of the church catholic.

4. It depends on the communication of spiritual gifts, for the work of the ministry, in this church-state, as is expressly declared, Ephes. iv. 8. 11—15. The continuation of the church, as unto the essence of it, depends on the communication of saving grace. If Christ should no more give of his grace and Spirit unto men, there would be no more church in the world, as unto its internal form and essence. But the continuation of the church as it is organical, that is, a society incorporated according unto the mind of Christ, with rulers and officers, for the authoritative administration of all its concerns, especially for the preaching of the word and administration of the sacraments, depends on the communication of spiritual gifts and abilities. And if the Lord Jesus Christ should withhold the communication of spiritual gifts, this church-state must cease. An image of it may be erected, but the true church-state will fail; for that will hold no longer, but whilst the 'whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, and the edifying of itself in love,' Ephes. iv. 16. whilst it holds the head, &c. Col. ii. 19. such dead lifeless images are many churches in the world. But this communication of spiritual gifts unto the use of his disciples, to the end of the world, the Lord Christ hath taken the charge of on himself, as he is faithful in the administration of his kingly power. Ephes. iv. 8. 11—14.

Whereas, therefore, the Lord Christ, in the exercise of his right and power on the grant of the Father of a perpetual visible kingdom in this world, and the discharge of his own promise, hath, (1.) Appointed the ordinary offices which he will have continue in his church by an unalterable institution; (2.) Ordained that persons shall be called and set apart unto those offices, and for the discharge of that work and those duties, which he hath declared to belong thereunto; (3.) Furnished them with gifts and abilities for this work, and declared what their spiritual qualifications and moral endowments ought to be; (4.) Made it the duty of believers to observe all his institutions and commands,

whereof those which concern the erection and continuance of this church-state are the principal: and, (5.) Hath in their so doing, or their observance of all his commands, promised his presence with them, by which as by a charter of right he hath conveyed unto them, an interest in all the power, privileges, and promises that belong unto this state; it is evident that its perpetual continuation depends hereon, and is secured hereby. He hath not left this great concernment of his glory unto the wills of men, or any order they shall think meet to appoint.

Lastly; As a means of it, it depends on three things in believers themselves: (1.) A due sense of their duty to be found in obedience unto all the commands of Christ. Hereby they find themselves indispensably obliged unto all those things which are necessary unto the continuation of this state; and that all believers should absolutely at any time live in a total neglect of their duty, though they may greatly mistake in the manner of its performance, is not to be supposed. (2.) The instinct of the new creature and those in whom it is, so [to] associate themselves in holy communion, for the joint and mutual exercise of those graces of the Spirit which are the same, as unto the essence of them, in them all. The laws of Christ in and unto his church, as unto all outward obedience, are suited unto those inward principles and inclinations, which by his Spirit and grace he hath implanted in the hearts of them that believe. Hence his yoke is easy, and his commandments are not grievous. And therefore none of his true disciples since he had a church upon the earth did, or could, satisfy themselves in their own faith and obedience, singularly and personally; but would venture their lives and all that was dear unto them, for communion with others, and the associating themselves with them of the same spirit and way, for the observance of the commands of Christ. The martyrs of the primitive churches of old, lost more of their blood and lives for their meetings and assemblies, than for personal profession of the faith, and so also have others done under the Roman apostacy. It is a usual plea among them who engage in the persecution or punishment of such as differ from them; that if they please they may keep their opinions, their consciences, and faith unto themselves, without meetings for communion of public wor-

ship. And herein they suppose they deal friendly and gently with them. And this is our present case. It is true, indeed, as Tertullian observed of old, that men in these things have no power over us, but what they have from our own wills; we willingly choose to be, and to continue, what they take advantage to give us trouble for. And it is naturally in our power, to free ourselves from them and their laws, every day. But we like it not; we cannot purchase outward peace and quietness at any such rate. But as was said, the inward instinct of believers, from the same principles of faith, love, and all the graces of the Spirit, in them all, doth efficaciously lead and incline them unto their joint exercise in societies, unto the glory of Christ, and their own edification, or increase of the same graces in them. When this appears to be under the guidance of the commands of Christ, as unto the ways of communion led unto, and to consist in a compliance therewithal; they find themselves under an indispensable obligation unto it. Nor hath the Lord Christ left them liberty to make a composition for their outward peace, and to purchase quietness, with foregoing any part of their duty herein.

This therefore, I say, is a means and cause on the part of believers themselves of the continuation of this church-state. For this instinct of believers, leading them unto communion, which is an article of our faith, in conjunction with the law and commands of Christ, giving direction how and in what ways it is to be attained and exercised, binds and obliges them unto the continuation of this state; and the decay of this inward principle in them that profess Christian religion, hath been the great and almost only ground of its neglect.

(3.) The open evidence there is, that sundry duties required of us in the gospel can never be performed in a due manner, but where believers are brought into this state, which that they should enter into, is therefore in the first place required of them; what these duties are will afterward appear.

On these sure grounds is founded the continuation of the gospel church-state, under ordinary officers after the decease of the apostles; and so far secured, as that nothing needs be added unto them for that end. Do but suppose

that the Lord Christ yet liveth in heaven in the discharge of his mediatory office; that he hath given his word for a perpetual law unto all his disciples, and a charter to convey spiritual privileges unto them; that he abides to communicate gifts for the ministry unto men, and that there are any believers in the world, who know it to be their duty to yield obedience unto all the commands of Christ, and have any internal principle inclining them to that which they profess to believe as a fundamental article of their faith, namely, the communion of saints, and no man is desired to prove the certainty and necessity of the continuance of this state.

But there are some who maintain that the continuation and preservation of this church-state, depends solely on a successive ordination of church-officers, from the apostles, and so down throughout all ages unto the end of the world. For this they say is the only means of conveying church-power from one time to another; so as that if it fail, all church-state, order, and power must fail, never in this world to be recovered. There is, they say, a flux of power through the hands of the ordainers, unto the ordained, by virtue of their outward ordination, whereon the being of the church doth depend. Howbeit those who use this plea, are not at all agreed about those things which are essential in and unto this successive ordination. Some think that the Lord Christ committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven unto Peter only, and he to the bishop of Rome alone, from whose person therefore all their ordination must be derived. Some think, and those on various grounds, that it is committed unto all and only diocesan bishops, whose being and beginning are very uncertain. Others require no more unto it, but that presbyters be ordained by presbyters; who were rejected in their plea, by both the former sorts; and other differences almost innumerable among them who are thus minded might be reckoned up.

But whereas this whole argument about personal successive ordination, hath been fully handled; and the pretences of it disproved by the chiefest Protestant writers against the Papists; and because I design not an opposition unto what others think and do, but the declaration and confirmation of the truth in what we have proposed to insist

upon, I shall very briefly discover the falseness of this pretence, and pass on unto what is principally intended in this discourse.

1. The church is before all its ordinary officers; and therefore its continuation cannot depend on their successive ordination. It is so as essentially considered, though its being organical is simultaneous with their ordination. Extraordinary officers were before the church, for their work was to call, gather, and erect it out of the world. But no ordinary officers can be, or ever were ordained, but to a church in being. Some say they are ordained unto the universal visible church of professors; some unto the particular church wherein their work doth lie; but all grant that the church-state whereunto they are ordained, is antecedent unto their ordination. The Lord Christ could and did ordain apostles and evangelists, when there was yet no gospel church, for they were to be the instruments of its calling and erection. But the apostles neither did nor could ordain any ordinary officers, until there was a church or churches, with respect whereunto they should be ordained. It is therefore highly absurd to ascribe the continuation of the church unto the successive ordination of officers, if any such thing there were; seeing this successive ordination of officers depends solely on the continuation of the church. If that were not secured on other foundations, this successive ordination would quickly tumble into dust. (Yea, this successive ordination, were there any such thing appointed, must be an act of the church itself, and so cannot be the means of communicating church-power unto others. A successive ordination in some sense may be granted, namely, that when those who were ordained officers in any church do die, that others be ordained in their steads; but this is by an act of power in the church itself, as we shall manifest afterward).

2. Not to treat of papal succession; the limiting of this successive ordination, as the only way and means of communicating church-power, and so of the preservation of the church-state unto diocesan prelates or bishops, is built on so many inevident presumptions and false principles, as will leave it altogether uncertain whether there be any church-state in the world or no. As, (1.) That such bishops were

ordained by the apostles, which can never be proved. (2.) That they received power from the apostles to ordain others and communicate their whole power unto them by an authority, inherent in themselves alone; yet still reserving their whole power unto themselves also, giving all, and retaining all at the same time; which hath no more of truth than the former, and may be easily disproved. (3.) That they never did, nor could any of them forfeit this power, by any crime or error, so as to render their ordination invalid, and interrupt the succession pretended. (4.) That they all ordained others in such manner and way, as to render their ordination valid; whereas multitudes were never agreed what is required thereunto. (5.) That whatever heresy, idolatry, flagitiousness of life, persecution of the true churches of Christ, these prelatical ordainers might fall into, by whatever arts, simoniacal practices, or false pretences unto what was not, they came themselves into their offices, yet nothing could deprive them of their right of communicating all church-power unto others by ordination. (6.) That persons so ordained, whether they have any call from the church or no; whether they have any of the qualifications required by the law of Christ in the Scripture to make them capable of any office in the church, or have received any spiritual gifts from Christ for the exercise of their office and discharge of their duty; whether they have any design or no, to pursue the ends of that office which they take upon them; yet all is one, being any way prelatically ordained bishops, they may ordain others, and so the successive ordination is preserved. And what is this but to take the rule of the church out of the hand of Christ; to give law unto him, to follow with his approbation, the actings of men besides and contrary to his law and institution, and to make application of his promises unto the vilest of men, whether he will or no? (7.) That it is not lawful for believers or the disciples of Christ to yield obedience unto his commands, without this episcopal ordination, which many churches cannot have, and more will not, as judging it against the mind and will of Christ. (8.) That one worldly, ignorant, proud, sensual beast, such as some of the heads of this successive ordination, as the popes of Rome have been, should have more power and authority

from Christ to preserve and continue a church-state by ordination, than any the most holy church in the world, that is or can be gathered according to his mind; with other unwarrantable presumptions innumerable.

3. The pernicious consequences that may ensue on this principle, do manifest its inconsistency with what our Lord Jesus Christ hath ordained unto this end of the continuation of his church. I need not reckon them up on the surest probabilities. There is no room left for fears of what may follow hereon, by what hath already done so. If we consider whither this successive ordination hath already led a great part of the church, we may easily judge what it is meet for. It hath, I say, led men, for instance in the church of Rome, into a presumption of a good church-state in the loss of holiness and truth, in the practice of false worship and idolatry, in the persecution and slaughter of the faithful servants of Christ; unto a state plainly antichristian. To think there should be a flux and communication of heavenly and spiritual power, from Jesus Christ and his apostles, in and by the hands and actings of persons ignorant, simoniacal, adulterous, incestuous, proud, ambitious, sensual, presiding in a church-state never appointed by him, immersed in false and idolatrous worship, persecuting the true church of Christ, wherein was the true succession of apostolical doctrine and holiness, is an imagination for men who embrace the shadows and appearances of things, never once seriously thinking of the true nature of them. In brief, it is in vain to derive a succession whereon the being of the church should depend, through the presence of Christ with the bishops of Rome, who for a hundred years together, from the year 900 to 1000, were monsters for ignorance, lust, pride, and luxury; as Baronius acknowledgeth: A. D. 912. 5. 8. or by the church of Antioch, by Samosatenus, Eudoxius, Gnapheus, Severus, and the like heretics: or in Constantinople, by Macedonius, Eusebius, Demophilus, Anthorinus, and their companions: or at Alexandria, by Lucius, Dioscurus, Ælurus, Sergius, and the rest of the same sort.

4. The principal argument whereby this conceit is fully discarded, must be spoken unto afterward. And this is the due consideration of the proper subject of all church-

power, unto whom it is originally, formally, and radically given and granted by Jesus Christ. For none can communicate this power unto others, but those who have received it themselves from Christ, by virtue of his law and institution. Now this is the whole church, and not any person in it, or prelate over it. Look whatever constitutes it a church, that gives it all the power and privilege of a church; for a church is nothing but a society of professed believers, enjoying all church-power and privileges, by virtue of the law of Christ. Unto this church, which is his spouse, doth the Lord Christ commit the keys of his house, by whom they are delivered into the hands of his stewards so far as their office requires that trust. Now this (which we shall afterward more fully confirm) is utterly inconsistent with the committing of all church-power unto one person by virtue of his ordination by another.

Nothing that hath been spoken doth at all hinder or deny, but that where churches are rightly constituted, they ought in their offices, officers, and order to be preserved by a successive ordination of pastors and rulers, wherein those who actually preside in them, have a particular interest in the orderly communication of church-power unto them.

CHAP. IV.

The especial nature of the gospel church-state appointed by Christ.

THE principal inquiry which we have thus far prepared the way unto, and whereon all that ensues unto it doth depend, is concerning the especial nature of that church-state, rule, and order, which the Lord Christ hath instituted under the gospel, of what sort and kind it is. And hereunto some things must be premised.

1. I design not here to oppose, nor any way to consider such additions as men may have judged necessary to be added unto that church-state which Christ hath appointed, to render it, in their apprehension, more useful unto its ends than otherwise it would be. Of this sort there are many things in the world, and of a long season have been so. But

our present business is to prove the truth, and not to disprove the conceits of other men. And so far as our cause is concerned herein, it shall be done by itself, so as not to interrupt us in the declaration of the truth.

2. Whereas there are great contests about communion with churches, or separation from them, and mutual charges of impositions and schisms thereon, they must be all regulated by this inquiry; namely, what is that church-state which Christ hath prescribed. Herein alone is conscience concerned as unto all duties of ecclesiastical communion. Neither can a charge of schism be managed against any, but on a supposition of sin, with respect unto that church-state and order which Christ hath appointed. A dissent from any thing else, however pretended to be useful, yea advantageous unto church ends, must come under other prudential considerations. All which shall be fully proved, and vindicated from the exceptions of Dr. Stillingfleet.

3. There have been, and are in the world, several sorts of churches of great power and reputation, of several forms and kinds, yet contributing aid to each other in their respective stations; as, (1.) The papal church, which pretends itself to be catholic or universal, comprehensive of all true believers or disciples of Christ, united in their subjection unto the bishop of Rome. (2.) There were of old, and the shadow of them is still remaining, churches called patriarchal, first three, then four, then five of them, whereinto all other churches and professed Christians in the Roman world were distributed, as unto a dependance on the authority, and subjection to the jurisdiction and order, of the bishops of five principal cities of the empire, who were thereon called patriarchs. (3.) Various divisions under them, of archiepiscopal or metropolitical churches; and under them of those that are now called diocesan, whose bounds and limits were fixed and altered according to the variety of occasions and occurrences of things in the nations of the world. What hath been the original of all these sorts of churches, how from parochial assemblies, they grew up by the degrees of their descent now mentioned, into the height and centre of papal omnipotency, hath been declared elsewhere sufficiently.

4. Some there are, who plead for a national church-state, arising from an association of the officers of particular

churches, in several degrees, which they call classical and provincial, until it extend itself unto the limits of a whole nation, that is one civil body, depending as such on its own supreme ruler and law. I shall neither examine nor oppose this opinion; there hath been enough, if not too much already disputed about it. But,

5. The visible church-state which Christ hath instituted under the New Testament, consists in an especial society or congregation of professed believers, joined together according unto his mind, with their officers, guides, or rulers, whom he hath appointed, which do, or may meet together, for the celebration of all the ordinances of divine worship, the professing and authoritatively proposing the doctrine of the gospel, with the exercise of the discipline prescribed by himself, unto their own mutual edification, with the glory of Christ, in the preservation and propagation of his kingdom in the world.

The things observable in this description, and for the farther declaration of it, are, (1.) The material cause of this church, or the matter whereof it is composed; which are visible believers. (2.) The formal cause of it, which is their voluntary coalescency into such a society or congregation, according to the mind of Christ. (3.) The end of it, is presential local communion, in all the ordinances and institutions of Christ, in obedience unto him, and their own edification. (4.) In particular these ends are, [1.] The preaching of the word, unto the edification of the church itself, and the conversion of others. [2.] Administration of the sacraments, or all the mystical appointments of Christ in the church. [3.] The preservation and exercise of evangelical discipline. [4.] Visibly to profess their subjection unto Christ in the world, by the observation of his commands. (5.) The bounds and limits of this church, are taken from the number of the members, which ought not to be so small, as that they cannot observe and do all that Christ hath commanded in due order; nor yet so great as not to meet together for the ends of institution of the church before mentioned. (6.) That this church in its complete state, consists of pastors, or a pastor and elders, who are its guides and rulers, and the community of the faithful under their rule. (7.) That unto such a church, and every one of them, be-

longs of right all the privileges, promises, and power, that Christ doth give and grant unto the church in this world.

These, and sundry other things of the like nature, shall be afterward spoken unto in their order, according unto the method intended in the present discourse.

Two things I shall now proceed unto. 1. To prove that Christ hath appointed this church-state under the gospel, namely, of a particular or single congregation. 2. That he hath appointed no other church-state that is inconsistent with this, much less that is destructive of it.

First, Christ appointed that church-state which is meet and accommodated unto all the ends which he designed in his institution of a church. But such alone is that church form and order that we have proposed. In Christ's institution of the church, it was none of his ends, that some men might be thereby advanced to rule, honour, riches, or secular grandeur; but the direct contrary; Matt. xx. 25—28. Nor did he do it, that his disciples might be ruled and governed by force or the laws of men; or that they should be obstructed in the exercise of any graces, gifts, or privileges that he had purchased for them, or would bestow on them. And to speak plainly (let it be despised by them that please), this cannot greatly value that church-state which is not suited to guide, excite, and direct the exercise of all evangelical graces unto the glory of Christ in a due manner. For, to propose peculiar and proper objects for them, to give peculiar motives unto them, to limit the seasons and circumstances of their exercise, and regulate the manner of the performance of the duties that arise from them, is one principal end of their institution.

It would be too long to make a particular inquiry into all the ends for which the Lord Christ appointed this church-state, which indeed are all the duties of the gospel, either in themselves, or in the manner of their performance. We may reduce them unto these three general heads:

1. The professed subjection of the souls and consciences of believers unto his authority, in their observance of his commandments. He requireth that all who are baptized into his name, be taught to 'do and observe all things whatever he commanded;' Matt. xxviii. 18—20. And God is to be glorified, not only in their subjection, but in their professed

subjection unto the gospel of Christ. 2 Cor. xix. 13. Having given an express charge unto his disciples, to make public profession of his name, and not to be deterred from it by shame or fear of any thing that may befall them on the account thereof, and that on the penalty of his disowning them before his heavenly Father, Matt. viii. 33—38. x. 33. he hath appointed this church-state, as the way and means whereby they may jointly and visibly make profession of this their subjection to him, dependence on him, and freedom in the observation of all his commands. He will not have this done singly and personally only, but in society and conjunction. Now this cannot be done in any church-state imaginable, wherein the members of the church cannot meet together for this end, which they can only do in such a church as is congregational.

2. The joint celebration of all gospel ordinances and worship, is the great and principal end of the evangelical church-state. How far this is directed unto by the law of nature was before declared. Man was made for society in things natural and civil, but especially in things spiritual, or such as concern the worship of God. Hereon depends the necessity of particular churches, or societies for divine worship. And this is declared to be the end of the churches instituted by Christ, Acts ii. 42. 1 Cor. xi. 20. v. 4, 5. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. as also of the institution of officers in the church, for the solemn administration of the ordinances of his worship. And the reasons of this appointment are intimated in the Scripture; as, (1.) That it might be a way for the joint exercise of the graces and gifts of the Spirit; as was in general before mentioned. The Lord Christ gives both his grace and his gifts in great variety of measures, Eph. iv. 7. but 'the manifestation of the Spirit is given unto every man to profit withal;' 1 Cor. xii. 7, 8. He gives neither of them unto any merely for themselves. Saving grace is firstly given for the good of him that receives it; but respect is had in it unto the good of others; and the Lord Christ expects such an exercise of it, as may be to others' advantage. And the first end of gifts is the edification of others; and all that do receive them are thereby, and so far, 'stewards of the manifold grace of God;' 1 Pet. iv. 10. Wherefore, for the due exercise of these gifts and graces unto his glory, and their

proper ends, he hath appointed particular congregations, in whose assemblies alone they can be duly exercised. (2.) Hereby all his disciples are mutually edified; that is, increased in light, knowledge, faith, love, fruitfulness in obedience, and conformity unto himself. This the apostle affirms to be the especial end of all churches, their offices, officers, gifts, and order, Eph. iv. 12—16. and again, chap. ii. 19. No church-state that is not immediately suited unto this end, is of his institution. And though others may in general pretend unto it, besides that of particular congregations, it were to be wished that they were not obstructive of it, or were any way fitted or useful unto it. (3.) That he might hereby express and testify his promised presence with his disciples unto the end of the world. Matt. xxviii. 20. xviii. 20. Rev. i. 13. It is in their church assemblies, and in the performance of his holy worship, that he is present with his disciples according unto his promise. (4.) In these churches, thus exercised in the holy worship of God, he gives us a resemblance and representation of the great assembly above, who worship God continually before his throne, which is too large a subject here to insist upon.

And to manifest that assemblies of the whole church, at once and in one place, for the celebration of divine worship, is of the essence of a church, without which it hath no real being; when God had instituted such a church form, as wherein all the members of it could not ordinarily come together every week for this end; yet he ordained that, for the preservation of their church-state, three times in the year the males (which was the circumcised church), should appear together in one place to celebrate the most solemn ordinances of his worship. Exod. xxiii. 14. xxxiv. 23. Deut. xvi. 16. All those difficulties which arose from the extent of the limits of that church unto the whole nation, being removed, these meetings of the whole church for the worship of God become a continual duty; and when they cannot be observed in any church, the state or kind of it is not instituted by Christ.

3. The third end of the institution of the gospel church-state is the exercise and preservation of the discipline appointed by Christ to be observed by his disciples. The ancients do commonly call the whole religion of Christianity

by the name of the discipline of Christ, that is, the faith and obedience which he hath prescribed unto them, in contradistinction and opposition unto the rules and prescriptions of all philosophical societies. And it is that, without which the glory of Christian religion can in no due manner be preserved. The especial nature of it shall be afterward fully spoken unto. For the use of the present argument I shall only speak unto the ends of it, or what it is that the Lord Christ designeth in the institution of it; and these things may be referred unto four heads.

(1.) The preservation of the doctrine of the gospel in its purity, and obedience unto the commands of Christ in its integrity. For the first, the Scripture is full of predictions, all confirmed in the event, that after the days of the apostles there should be various attempts to wrest, corrupt, and pervert the doctrine of the gospel, and to bring in pernicious errors and heresies. To prevent, or reprove, and remove them, is no small part of the duty of the ministerial office in the dispensation of the word. But whereas those who taught such perverse things, did for the most part arise at first in the churches themselves, Acts xx. 30, 2 Pet. ii. 1. 1 John ii. 19. as the preaching of the word was appointed for the rebuke of the doctrines themselves; so this discipline was ordained in the church with respect unto the persons of them by whom they were taught. Rev. ii. 2. xiv. 20. 3 John viii. 9. Gal. v. 12. And so also it was with respect unto schisms and divisions that might fall out in the church. The way of suppressing things of this nature by external force, by the sword of magistrates, in prisons, fines, banishments, and death, was not then thought of, nor directed unto by the Lord Jesus Christ; but is highly dishonourable unto him, as though the ways of his own appointment were not sufficient for the preservation of his own truth; but that his disciples must betake themselves unto the secular powers of this world, who for the most part are wicked, profane, and ignorant of the truth, for that end.

And hereunto belongeth the preservation of his commands in the integrity of obedience. For he appointed that hereby care should be taken of the ways, walkings, and conversation of his disciples, that in all things it should be such as became the gospel. Hence the exercise of this discipline

he ordained to consist in exhortations, admonitions, reproofs, of any that should offend in things moral or of his especial institution, with the total rejection of them that were obstinate in their offences, as we shall see afterward.

(2.) The second end of it was to preserve love entire among his disciples. This was that which he gave in especial charge unto all that should believe in his name, taking the command of it to be his own in a peculiar manner, and declaring our observance of it, to be the principal pledge and evidence of our being his disciples. For although mutual love be an old commandment, belonging both unto the moral law, and sundry injunctions under the Old Testament; yet the degrees and measure of it, the ways and duties of its exercises, the motives unto it, and reasons for it, were wholly his own, whereby it becomes a new commandment also. For the preservation and continuance of this love, which he lays so great weight upon, was this discipline appointed, which it is several ways effectual towards. As, [1.] In the prevention or removal of offences that might arise among believers, to the impeachment of it. Matt. xviii. 15—17. [2.] In that watch over each other with mutual exhortations and admonitions, without which this love, let men pretend what they please, will not be preserved. That which keepeth either life or soul in Christian love, consists in the exercise of those graces mutually and the discharge of those duties, whereby they may be partakers of the fruits of love in one another. And for the most part, those who pretend highly unto the preservation of love, by their coming to the same church who dwell in the same parish, have not so much as the carcase, nay, not a shadow of it. In the discipline of the Lord Christ it is appointed that this love, so strictly by him enjoined unto us, so expressive of his own wisdom and love, should be preserved, continued, and increased, by the due and constant discharge of the duties of mutual exhortation, admonition, prayer, and watchful care over one another. Rom. xv. 14. 1 Thess. v. 11, 12. 2 Thess. iii. 15. Heb. iii. 12, 13. xii. 15, 16.

(3.) A third end of it is, that it might be a due representation of his own love, care, tenderness, patience, meekness, in the acting of his authority in the church. Where this is not observed and designed in the exercise of church disci-

pline, I will not say it is antichristian, but will say, it is highly injurious and dishonourable unto him. For all church-power is in him, and derived from him; nor is there any thing of that nature which belongs unto it, but it must be acted in his name, and esteemed both for the manner and matter of it, to be his act and deed. For men, therefore, to pretend unto the exercise of this discipline, in a wordly frame of spirit, with pride and passion, by tricks of laws and canons, in courts foreign to the churches themselves which are pretended to be under this discipline, it is a woful and scandalous representation of Christ, his wisdom, care, and love towards his church. But as for his discipline he hath ordained, that it shall be exercised in, and with meekness, patience, gentleness, evidence of zeal for the good and compassion of the souls of men, with gravity and authority, so as that therein all the holy affections of his mind towards his church, or any in it, in their mistakes, failings, and miscarriages, may be duly represented, as well as his authority acted among them. Isa. xl. 11. 2 Cor. x. 1. Gal. v. 22, 23. 1 Thess. ii. 7. 2 Tim. ii. 24—26. James iii. 17. 1 Cor. xiii.

(4.) It is in part appointed to be an evidence and pledge of the future judgment, wherein the whole church shall be judged before the throne of Christ Jesus. For in the exercise of this discipline Christ is on his own judgment-seat in the church; nor may any man pronounce any sentence but what he believeth that Christ himself would pronounce were he visibly present, and what is according to his mind as declared in his word. Hence Tertullian calls the sentence of excommunication in the church, 'futuri judicii præjudicium;' a representation of the future judgment.

4. In all that degeneracy which the Christian professing church hath fallen into, in faith, worship, and manners, there is no instance can exceed the corruption of this divine institution. For that which was the honour of Christ and the gospel, and an effectual means to represent him in the glory of his wisdom and love, and for the exercise of all graces in the church, unto the blessed ends now declared; was turned into a domination, earthly and secular, exercised in a profane, litigious, unintelligible process, according unto the arts, ways, and terms, of the worst of law courts, by persons for the most part remote from any just pretence of the least

interest in church-power, on causes and for ends foreign unto the discipline of the gospel, by a tyranny over the consciences and over the persons of the disciples of Christ, unto the intolerable scandal of the gospel, and rule of Christ in his church, as is evident in the state and rule of the church of Rome. As these are the general ends of the institution of a church-state under the gospel, and in order unto them, it is a great divine ordinance for the glory of Christ, with the edification and salvation of them that do believe. Wherefore that church-state which is suited unto these ends is that which is appointed by Christ; and whatever kind of church or churches is not so, primarily, and as such, are not of his appointment. But it is in congregational churches alone that these things can be done and observed. For unto all of them there are required assemblies of the whole church; which wherever they are, that church is congregational. No such churches as those mentioned before, papal, patriarchical, metropolitical, diocesan, or in any way national, are capable of the discharge of these duties, or attaining of these ends. If it be said, that what they cannot do in themselves, as that they cannot together in one place profess and express their subjection unto the commands of Christ, they cannot have personal communion in the celebration of gospel ordinances of worship, nor exercise discipline in one body and society; they can yet do the same things otherwise; partly in single congregations appointed by themselves, and partly in such ways for the administration of discipline, as are suited unto their state and rule; that is, by ecclesiastical courts, with jurisdiction over all persons or congregations belonging unto them, it will not help their cause. For, (1.) Those particular congregations wherein these things are to be observed, are churches, or they are not. If they are churches, they are of Christ's appointment, and we obtain what we aim at; nor is it in the power of any man to deprive them of any thing that belongs unto them as such: if they are not, but inventions and appointments of their own, then that which they say is this; that 'what is absolutely necessary unto the due observation of the worship of God, and unto all the ends of churches, being not appointed by Christ, is by them provided for, appointed and ordained;' which is to exalt themselves in

wisdom and care above him, and to place themselves in a nearer relation to the church than he. To grant that many of those things which are the ends for which any church-state under the gospel is appointed, cannot be performed or attained, but in and by particular congregations, and yet to deny that those particular congregations are of Christ's institution, is to speak contradictions, and at the same time to affirm, that they are churches, and are not churches. (2.) A church is such a body or society, as hath spiritual power, privileges, and promises annexed unto it, and accompanying of it. That which hath not so, as such, is no church. The particular congregations mentioned have this power, with privileges and promises belonging to them, or they have not. If they have not, they are no churches, at least no complete churches, and there are no churches in the earth wherein those things can be done, for which the being of churches was ordained, as namely, the joint celebration of divine worship by all the members of them. If they have such power, I desire to know from whence or whom they have it; if from Christ, then are they of his institution; and who can divest them of that power, or any part of it? That they have it from men, I suppose will not be pretended. (3.) As unto that way of the exercise of discipline suited unto any other church-state but that which is congregational, we shall consider it afterward. (4.) What is done in particular congregations, is not the act of any greater church; as a diocesan or the like. For whatever acts any thing, acts according unto what it is; but this of joint worship and discipline in assemblies, is not the act of such a church, according unto what it is; for so it is impossible for it to do any thing of that nature. But thus it is fallen out. Some men under the power of a tradition that particular congregations were originally of a divine institution, and finding the absolute necessity of them unto the joint celebration of divine worship, yet finding what an inconsistency with their interest, and some other opinions which they have imbibed, should they still be acknowledged to be of the institution of Christ, seeing thereon the whole ordinary power given by Christ unto his church must reside in them, they would now have them to be only conveniences for some ends of worship of their own finding out. Something they would have like Christ's institution, but his it shall not be, which is an image,

Secondly, The very notation of the word doth determine the sense of it unto a particular congregation. Other things may in churches, as we shall see afterward, both in the rule and administration of the duties of holy worship, be ordered and disposed in great variety: but whilst a church is such, as that ordinarily the whole body, in its rulers and those that are ruled, do assemble together in one place for the administration of gospel ordinances and the exercise of discipline, it is still one single congregation, and can be neither diocesan, provincial, nor national. So that although the essence of the church doth not consist in actual assemblies, yet are they absolutely necessary unto its constitution in exercise.

Hence is the name of a church. קהל the verb in the Old Testament, is to congregate, to assemble, to call and meet together, and nothing else. The LXX render it mostly by ἐκκλησιάζω, to congregate in a church assembly; and sometimes by other words of the same importance, as συνιστημι, συνάγω, ἐπισυνάγω; so they do the noun קהל by συναγωγη, ἐκκλησία; seldom by any other word, but where they do so it is always of the same signification: wherefore this word signifies nothing but a congregation which assembles for the ends and uses of it, and acts its duties and powers; so doth ἐκκλησία also in the New Testament. It may be sometimes applied unto that whose essence is not denoted thereby, as the church catholic invisible, which is only a mystical society or congregation. But wherever it is used to denote an outward visible society, it doth connote their assemblies together in one. It is frequently used for an actual assembly, Acts xix. 32. 39, 40. which was the signification of it in all Greek writers. 1 Cor. xiv. 3, 4. And sometimes it is expressly affirmed, that it 'met together in the same place;' 1 Cor. xiv. 23. Wherefore, no society that doth not congregate, the whole body whereof doth not meet together to act its powers and duties, is a church, or may be so called, whatever other sort of body or corporation it may be.

In this sense is the word used when the first intimation is given of an evangelical church-state with order and discipline: Matt. xviii. 17. 'If he shall neglect to hear them, tell the church,' &c. There have been so many contests about the sense of these words, and the interpretation of

them; so many various and opposite opinions about them, and those debated in such long and operous discourses, that some would take an argument from thence, that nothing can be directly proved from them, nor any certain account of the state and duty of the church be thence collected. But nothing can be insinuated more false and absurd, nor which more directly tendeth to the overthrow of the whole authority of the Scripture; for if when men are seduced by their interests or otherwise to multiply false expositions of any place of Scripture, and to contend earnestly about them, that thereon as unto us they lose their instructive power and certain determination of the truth, we should quickly have no bottom or foundation for our faith in the most important articles of religion, nor could have so at this day. But all the various pretences of men, some whereof would have the pope, others a general council, some the civil magistrate, some the Jewish synagogue, some a company of arbitrators, are nothing but so many instances of what interest, prejudice, corrupt lusts, ambitious designs, with a dislike of the truth, will bring forth. To me it seems strange, that any impartial man reading this context can take the church in this place in any other sense but for such a society, as whereunto an offending and offended brother or disciple of Christ, might and ought to belong, to the body whereof they might address themselves for relief and remedy, or the removal of offences, by virtue of the authority and appointment of Jesus Christ.

It were an endless task, and unsuited unto our present design, to examine the various pretensions unto the church in this place; enough also, if not too much, hath been written already about them. I shall therefore observe only some few things from the context, which will sufficiently evidence what sort of church it is that is here intended.

1. The rule and direction given by our Saviour in this place unto his disciples, doth not concern civil injuries, as such; but such sins as have scandal and offence in them, either causing other men to sin, or giving them grief and offence for sin, whereby the exercise of love in mutual communion may be impeded. Private injuries may be respected herein, but not as injuries, but so far as they are scandalous,

and matter of offence unto them unto whom they are known. And this appears,

(1.) From the proper signification of the phrase here used; ἐὰν ἁμαρτήσῃ εἰς σέ. 'If thy brother sin against thee.' Doing of an injury is expressed by ἀδικέω, and to be injured, by ἀποστερέωμαι, 1 Cor. vi. 8, 9. that is, to be wronged, to be dealt unjustly withal, and to be defrauded or deprived of our right. But ἁμαρτάνω εἰς is not used, but only so to sin as to give scandal unto them against whom that sin is said to be. 1 Cor. viii. 11, 12. To be guilty of sin against Christ in the light of their consciences, is to sin against them.

(2.) It is evident in the context. Our Saviour is treating directly about all sorts of scandals and offences, or sins, as occasions of falling, stumbling, and sinning, and so of perishing unto others, giving rules and directions about them from the eighth verse, unto these words wherein direction is given about their cure and removal. And two things he ascribes unto these scandals; (1.) That weak Christians are despised in them, ver. 10. (2.) That they are in danger to be destroyed or lost for ever by them, ver. 14. which gives us a true account of the nature of scandalous offences. Wherefore ἁμαρτάνω, to sin, is used here in the same sense with σκανδαλίζω before, to give offence by a scandalous miscarriage.

(3.) Where the same rule is again recorded, the words used enforce this application of them; Luke xvii. 1—3. The Lord Christ foretels his disciples that scandals and offences would arise, with the nature and danger of them, ver. 1. And because that they obtain their pernicious effects mostly on them that are weak, he gives caution against them with especial respect to such among his disciples; better any one were cast into the sea, ἢ ἵνα σκανδαλίσῃ ἕνα τῶν μικρῶν τούτων 'than that he should give scandal or offence unto one of these little ones;' ver. 2. And what he expresseth by σκανδαλίσῃ, ver. 2. he expresseth by ἁμάρτῃ εἰς σε, ver. 3. 'sin against thee;' and this is plain from the direction which he gives hereon, ἐπιτίμησον αὐτῷ, 'rebuke him.' The word is never used with respect unto private injuries; but as they are sins or faults; so is it joined with ἔλεγξον, 2 Tim. iv. 2.

and ἐπιτιμία is the only word used for the rebuke given, or to be given, unto a scandalous offender; 2 Cor. ii. 6.

(4.) Another rule is given in case of private injuries that are only such, and that is, that we immediately forgive them.

(5.) It doth not seem a direction suited unto that intense love which the Lord Christ requireth in all his disciples one towards another, nor the nature of that love in its exercise, as it is described, 1 Cor. xiii. that for a private injury done unto any man, without respect unto sin against God therein, which is the scandal, he should follow his brother so far as to have him cast out of the communion of all churches and believers, which yet in case of sin unrepented of is a necessary duty.

2. The rule here prescribed, and the direction given, were so prescribed and given for the use of all the disciples of Christ in all ages, and are not to be confined unto any present case, or the present season. For, (1.) There was no such case at present, no mutual offence among any of his disciples, that should require this determination of it, only respect is had unto what might afterward fall out in the church. (2.) There was no need of any such direction at that time, because Christ himself was then constantly present with them, in whom all church power did reside both eminently and formally. Accordingly, when any of them did offend unto scandal, he did himself rebuke them, Matt. xvi. 22, 23. and when any thing of mutual offence fell out among them, he instructed them, and directed them into the way of love, doing what any church could do, and much more also; Matt. xx. 24—28. (3.) This was a case which our Saviour foreknew and foretold, that it would fall out in the church in future generations, even unto the end of the world. It doth so every day, and will do so whilst men are in an imperfect state here below. Nor is there any thing wherein the church, as unto its order, purity, and edification, is more concerned: nor can any of them be preserved without a certain rule for the cure and healing of offences; nor are so in any church where such a rule is not, or is neglected. It is therefore fond to suppose, that our Saviour should prescribe this rule for that season

wherein there is no need of it, and not for those times wherein the church could not subsist in order without it.

3. The church here directed unto, is a Christian church. For, (1.) Whereas it hath been proved, it concerned the times to come afterward; there was in those times nothing that could pretend unto the name of the church but a Christian church only. The Jewish synagogues had an utter end put unto them, so as that an address unto any of them in this case was not only useless but unlawful. And as unto magistrates or arbitrators, to have them called the church, and that in such a sense as that after the interposition of their authority or advice, a man should be freed from the discharge of all Christian duties, such as are mutually required among the disciples of Christ towards his brother, is a fond imagination. For, (2.) It is such a church, as can exercise authority in the name of Christ, over his disciples, and such as in conscience they should be bound to submit themselves unto. For the reason given of the contempt of the voice, judgment, and sentence of the church in case of offence, is their power of spiritual binding and loosing, which is committed by Christ thereunto, and so he adds immediately, ver. 18. 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven;' is the privilege of a Christian church only.

4. It is a visible particular congregation alone that is intended. For, (1.) As unto the church, in other acceptations of that name, either for the catholic invisible church, or for the whole body of professed believers throughout the world, it is utterly impossible that this duty should be observed towards it, as is manifest unto all. (2.) We have proved that the first and most proper signification of the word is of a single congregation, assembling together for its duties and enjoyments. Wherever therefore the church in general is mentioned, without the addition of any thing or circumstance that may lead unto another signification; it must be interpreted of such a particular church or congregation. (3.) The persons intended, offending, and offended, must belong unto the same society unto whom the address is to be made; or else the one party may justly decline the

judicatory applied unto, and so frustrate the process. And it must be such a church, as unto whom they are known in their circumstances, without which it is impossible that a right judgment in sundry cases can be made in point of offence. (4.) It is a church of an easy address; 'Go tell the church;' which supposeth that free and immediate access, which all the members of a church have unto that whole church whereof they are members. Wherefore, (5.) It is said, εἶπε τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ, 'tell the church;' not a church, but the church; namely, whereunto thou and thy brother do belong. (6.) One end of this direction is, that the offending and the offended parties may continue together in the communion of the same church, in love without dissimulation: which thing belongs unto a particular congregation. (7.) The meaning is not, Tell the diocesan bishop; for whatever church he may have under his rule, yet is not he himself a church. Nor is it, (8.) the chancellor's court that our Saviour intended. Be it what it will, it is a disparagement unto all churches, to have that name applied thereunto. Nor, lastly, is it a presbytery, or association of the elders of many particular congregations, that is intended. For the power claimed in such associated presbyteries, is with respect unto what is already in or before particular congregations, which they have not either wisdom or authority, as is supposed, finally to order and determine. But this supposeth, that the address in the first place be made unto a particular congregation, which therefore is firstly and properly here intended.

All things are plain, familiar, and exposed to the common understandings of all believers, whose minds are any way exercised about these things, as indeed are all things that belong unto the discipline of Christ. Arguments pretendedly deep and learned, really obscure and perplexed, with logical notions and distinctions, applied unto things thus plain and evident in themselves, do serve only to involve and darken the truth. It is plain in the place, (1.) That there was a church-state for Christians, then designed by Christ, which afterward he would institute and settle. (2.) That all true disciples were to join and unite themselves in some such church, as might be helpful unto their love, order, peace, and edification. (3.) That among the members

of these churches, offences would or might arise, which in themselves tend unto pernicious events. (4.) That if these offences could not be cured and taken away, so as that love without dissimulation might be continued among all the members of the churches, an account of them at last was to be given unto that church or society whereunto the parties concerned do belong as members of it. (5.) That this church should hear, determine, and give judgment with advice, in the cases so brought unto it, for the taking away and removal of all offences. (6.) That this determination of the church is to be rested in, on the penalty of a deprivation of all the privileges of the church. (7.) That these things are the institution and appointment of Christ himself, whose authority in them all is to be submitted unto, and which alone can cast one that is a professed Christian into the condition of a heathen or a publican.

These things in the notion and practice of them, are plain, easy, and exposed to the understanding of the meanest of the disciples of Christ; as it is meet, that all things should be, wherein their daily practice is concerned. But it is not easily to be expressed, into what horrible perplexities and confusions they have been wrested in the church of Rome, nor how those who depart from the plain obvious sense of the words, and love not the practice they direct unto, do lead themselves and others into ways and paths that have neither use nor end. From the corrupt abuse of the holy institution of our Lord Jesus Christ here intended, so many powers, faculties, courts, jurisdictions, legal processes, with litigious, vexatious, oppressive courses of actions and trials whose very names are uncouth, horrid, foreign unto religion, and unintelligible without cunning in an artificial barbarous science of the canon law, have proceeded, as are enough to fill a sober rational man with astonishment, how it could ever enter into the minds of men to suppose, that they can possibly have any relation unto this divine institution. Those who are not utterly blinded with interest and prejudice, wholly ignorant of the gospel, and the mind of Christ therein, as also strangers from the practice of the duties which it requires, will hardly believe, that in this context our Lord Jesus Christ designed to set up, and erect an earthly domination in and over his churches, to be

administered by the rules of the canon law, and the rota at Rome. They must be spiritually mad and ridiculous, who can give the least entertainment unto such an imagination.

Nor can the discipline of any diocesan churches, administered in and by courts and officers, foreign to the Scripture, both name and thing, be brought within the view of this rule; nor can all the art of the world make any application of it thereunto: for what some plead concerning magistrates or arbitrators, they are things which men would never betake themselves unto, but only to evade the force of that truth which they love not. All this is fallen out by men's departing from the simplicity of the gospel, and a contempt of that sense of the words of the Lord Jesus, which is plain and obvious unto all who desire not only to hear his words, but also to observe his commands.

Thirdly, Our third argument is taken from the nature of the churches instituted by the apostles and their order, as it is expressed in the Scripture. For they were all of them congregational, and of no other sort. This the ensuing considerations will make evident.

1. There were many churches planted by the apostles in very small provinces. Not to insist on the churches of Galatia, Gal. i. 1. concerning which it is nowhere intimated, that they had any one head or mother church, metropolitical, or diocesan; nor of those of Macedonia, distinct from that of Philippi, whereof we have spoken before; upon the first coming of Paul after his conversion unto Jerusalem, which was three years, Gal. i. 18. in the fourth year after the ascension of Christ, there were churches planted in all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria; Acts ix. 31. Neither of the two latter provinces was equal unto one ordinary diocese. Yet were there churches in both of them, and that in so short a time after the first preaching of the gospel, as that it is impossible they should be conceived to be any other but single congregations. What is excepted or opposed hereunto by the Rev. Dr. Stillingfleet shall be examined and disproved afterward by itself, that the progress of our discourse be not here interrupted.

2. These churches were such, as that the apostles appointed in them ordinary elders and deacons, that might administer all ordinances unto the whole church, and take care

of all the poor. Acts xiv. 23. xx. 28. Now the care, inspection, and labour of ordinary officers, can extend itself no farther than unto a particular congregation. No man can administer all ordinances unto a diocesan church. And this ordaining elders in every church, is the same with ordaining them in every city, Tit. i. 5. that is, in every town wherein there was a number converted unto the faith: as is evident from Acts xiv. 23. And it was in towns and cities ordinarily that the gospel was first preached, and first received. Such believers being congregated and united in the profession of the same faith and subjection unto the authority of Christ, did constitute such a church-state as it was the will of Christ, they should have bishops, or elders and deacons, ordained amongst them; and were therefore, as unto their state, such churches as he owned.

3. It is said of most of these churches expressly, that they respectively met together in one place, or had their assemblies of the whole church, for the discharge of the duties required of them, which is peculiar unto congregational churches only; so did the church at Jerusalem on all occasions. Acts xv. 12. 22. xxi. 22. See chap. v. 11. vi. 1. It is of no force which is objected from the multitude of them that are said to believe, and so consequently were of that church; so as that they could not assemble together: for whereas the Scripture says expressly, that the multitude of the church did come together; it is scarce fair for us to say they were such a multitude as that they could not come together. And it is evident that the great numbers of believers that are said to be at Jerusalem, were there only occasionally, and were not fixed in that church. For many years after, a small village beyond Jordan could receive all that were so fixed in it. The church at Antioch gathered together in one assembly, Acts xiv. 27. to hear Paul and Silas. This church, thus called together, is called 'the multitude,' chap. xv. 30. that is, the whole brotherhood, at least of that church. The whole church of Corinth did assemble together in one place, both for solemn worship, and the exercise of discipline. 1 Cor. viii. 8. xiv. 25, 26. xi. 17, 20.

It is no way necessary to plead any thing in the illustration, or for the confirmation of these testimonies. They all of them speak positively in a matter of fact, which will ad-

mit of no debate, unless we will put in exceptions unto the veracity of their authors. And they are of themselves sufficient to establish our assertion. For whatever may be the state of any church, as unto its officers or rule, into what order soever it be disposed ordinarily or occasionally for its edification, so long as it is its duty to assemble in and with all its members in one place, either for the exercise of its power, the performance of its duty, or enjoyments of its privileges, it is a single congregation, and no more.

4. The duties prescribed unto all church members in the writings of the apostles, to be diligently attended unto by them, are such, as either in their nature, or the manner of their performance cannot be attended unto, and duly accomplished, but in a particular congregation only. This I shall immediately speak distinctly unto, and therefore only mention it in this place.

These things being so plainly, positively, and frequently asserted in the Scripture, it cannot be questionable unto any impartial mind, but that particular churches or congregations are of divine institution; and consequently, that unto them the whole power and privilege of the church doth belong; for if they do not so, whatever they are, churches they are not. If, therefore, any other church-state be supposed, we may well require that its name, nature, use, power, and bounds, be some or all of them declared in the Scripture. Reasonings drawn from the superiority of the apostles above the evangelists, of bishops above presbyters, or from church rule, in the hands of the officers of the church only; from the power of the Christian magistrate in things ecclesiastical from the meetness of union among all churches, are of no use in this case; for they are all consistent with the sole institution of particular congregations, nor do in the least intimate that there is, or needs to be, any other church-state of divine appointment.

CHAP. V.

The state of the first churches after the apostles, to the end of the second century.

In confirmation of the foregoing argument, we urge the president and example of the primitive churches, that succeeded unto those which were planted by the apostles themselves, and so may well be judged to have walked in the same way and order with them. And that which we allege is,

That in no approved writers for the space of two hundred years after Christ there is any mention made of any other organical, visibly professing church, but that only which is parochial, or congregational.

A church of any other form, state, or order, papal or oecumenical, patriarchal, metropolitical, diocesan, or classical, they know not, neither name nor thing, nor any of them appear in any of their writings.

Before I proceed unto the confirmation of this assertion by particular testimonies, I shall premise some things which are needful unto the right understanding of what it is that I intend to prove by them. As,

1. All the churches at first planted by the apostles, whether in the greatest cities, as Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Rome, &c. or those in the meanest villages of Judea, Galilee, or Samaria, were, as unto their church-state, in order, power, privilege, and duty, every way equal, not superior or inferior, not ruling over, or subject unto, one another. No institution of any inequality between them, no instance of any practice supposing it, no direction for any compliance with it, no one word of intimation of it, can be produced from the Scripture; nor is it consistent with the nature of the gospel church-state

2. In and among all these churches, there was one and the same spirit, one hope of their calling, 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism,' whence they were all obliged mutually to seek and endeavour the good and edification of each other; to be helpful to one another in all things, according unto that which any of them had received in the Lord. This they

did by prayer, by advice and counsel, by messengers sent with salutations, exhortations, consolations, supplies for the poor, and on all the like occasions. By these means, and by the exercise of that mutual love and care which they were obliged unto, they kept and preserved unity and communion among themselves, gave a common testimony against any thing that in doctrine or practice deviated from the rule and discipline of Christ. This order, with peace and love thereon, continued among them, until pride, ambition, desire of rule and pre-eminence, in Diotrephes, and a multitude of the same spirit with him, began to open a door unto the entrance of the mystery of iniquity, under pretence of a better order, than this which was of the appointment of Christ.

3. It must be acknowledged, that notwithstanding this equality among all churches, as unto their state and power, that there were great differences between them, some real and some in reputation, which not being rightly managed, proved an occasion of evil in and unto them all. For instance :

(1.) Some were more eminent in spiritual gifts than others. As this was a privilege that might have been greatly improved unto the honour of Christ and the gospel, yet we know how it was abused in the church of Corinth, and what disorders followed thereon : so weak and frail are the best of men, so liable unto temptation, that all pre-eminence is dangerous for them, and often abused by them ; which I confess makes me not a little admire to see men so earnestly pleading for it, so fearlessly assuming it unto themselves, so fiercely contending that all power and rule in the church belongs unto them alone. But,

(2.) Reputation was given unto some, by the long abode of some of the apostles in them; of this advantage we find nothing in the Scripture; but certain it is it was much pleaded and contended about among the primitive churches ; yea, so far until by degrees disputes arose about the places where this or that apostle fixed his seat ; which was looked on as a pre-eminence for the present, and a security for the future. But yet we know how soon some of them degenerated from the church-order and discipline, wherein they were instructed by the apostles. See Rev. ii. and iii.

(3.) The greatness, power, fame, or civil authority of the place or city where any church was planted, gave it an advantage and privilege in reputation above others. And the churches planted in such cities were quickly more numerous in their members than others were, unless men strictly kept themselves unto the force of primitive institutions, it was very hard for them to think and judge, that a church, it may be in a small village or town in Galilee, should be equal with that at Jerusalem or at Antioch, or afterward at Rome itself. The generality of men easily suffered themselves to be persuaded that those churches were advanced in state and order, far above the other obscure poor congregations. That there should be a church at Rome, the head city of the world, was a matter of great joy and triumph unto many, and the advancement of it in reputation they thought belonged unto the honour of our religion. Howbeit there is not in the Scripture the least regard expressed unto any of these things, of place, number, or possibility of outward splendour, either in the promises of the presence of Christ in and with his churches, or in the communication of power and privileges unto them. Yet such an improvement did this foolish imagination find, that after those who presided in the churches called in the principal cities, had tasted of the sweetness of the bait which lay in the ascription of a pre-eminence unto them, they began openly to claim it unto themselves, and to usurp authority over other churches, confirming their own usurpation by canons and rules, until a few of them in the council of Nice began to divide the Christian world among themselves, as if it had been conquered by them. Hence proceeded those shameful contests that were among the greater prelates about their pre-eminency; and hence arose that pretence of the bishops of Rome, unto no less a right of rule and dominion over all Christian churches, than the city had over all the nations and cities of the empire, which being carried on by all sorts of evil artifices, as by downright forgeries, shameless intrusions of themselves, impudent laying hold of all advantages unto their own exaltation, prevailed at length unto the utter ruin of all church-order and worship. There is no sober history of the rise and growth by several degrees of any city, com-

monwealth, or empire, that is filled with so many instances of ambitious seeking of pre-eminence, as our church stories are.

By this imagination were the generality of the prelates in those days, induced to introduce and settle a government in and among the churches of Christ, answering unto the civil government of the Roman empire. As the civil government was cast into national, or diocesan, or provincial, in less or greater divisions, each of which had its capital city, the place of the residence of the chief civil governor; so they designed to frame an image of it in the church, ascribing an alike dignity and power unto the prelates of those cities, and a jurisdiction extending itself unto nations, dioceses, and provinces. Hereby the lesser congregations, or parochial churches, being weakened in process of time, in their gifts and interest, were swallowed up in the power of the others, and became only inconsiderable appendices unto them, to be ruled at their pleasure. But these things fell out long after the times which we inquire into; only their occasion began to present itself unto men of corrupt minds from the beginning: but we have before at large discoursed of them.

(4.) Some churches had a great advantage in that the gospel, as the apostle speaks, 'went forth from them,' unto others. They in their ministry were the means first of the conversion of others unto the faith, and then of their gathering into a church-state, affording them assistance in all things they stood in need of. Hence these newly-formed churches, in lesser towns and villages, had always a great reverence for the church by whose means they were converted unto God, and stated in church-order. And it was meet that so they should have. But in process of time, as these lesser churches decreased in spiritual gifts, and fell under a scarcity of able guides, this reverence was turned into obedience and dependance; and they thought it well enough to be under the rule of others, being unable well to rule themselves.

On these and the like accounts there was quickly introduced an inequality among churches, which by virtue of their first institution were equal as unto state and power.

4. Churches may admit of many variations, as unto their outward form and order, which yet change not their state, nor cause them to cease from being congregational. As,

(1.) Supposing that any of them might have many elders or presbyters in them, as it is apparent that most of them had, yea, all that are mentioned in the Scripture had so; Acts ii. 30. xiv. 23. xv. 6. 22, 23. xvi. 4. xx. 17, 18. xxi. 18. Phil. i. 1. 1 Tim. v. 17. Tit. i. 5. they might, and some of them did, choose out some one endued with especial gifts, that might in some sort preside amongst them, and who had quickly the name of bishop appropriated unto him. This practice is thought to have had its original at Alexandria, and began generally to be received in the third century: but this changed not the state of the church; though it had no divine warrant to authorize it. For this order may be agreed unto among the elders of a particular congregation, and sundry things may fall out, inclining unto the reception of it. But from a distinct mention (if any such there be) in the writings of the second century of bishops and presbyters to fancy metropolitical and diocesan churches, is but a pleasant dream.

(2.) The members of these churches that were great and numerous, being under the care and inspection of their elders in common, might for the ordinary duty of divine worship meet in parts or several actual assemblies, and they did so especially in time of persecution. Nothing occurs more frequently in ecclesiastical story, than the meetings of Christians, in secret places, in private houses, yea, in caves and dens of the earth, when in some places it was impossible that the whole body of the church should so assemble together. How this disposition of the members of the church into several parts, in each of which some elder or elders of it did officiate, gave occasion unto the distinction of greater churches into particular titles or parishes, is not here to be declared; it may be so elsewhere: but neither yet did this alter the state of the churches, from their original institution. For,

(3.) Upon all extraordinary occasions, all such as concerned the whole church, as the choice of elders, or the deposition of them, the admission or exclusion of members, and the like, the whole church continued to meet together, which practice was plainly continued in the days of Cyprian, as we shall see afterward; neither doth it appear but that during the first two hundred years of the church, the whole body of the church did ordinarily meet together in one place, for

the solemn administration of the holy ordinances of worship, and the exercise of discipline.

Wherefore, notwithstanding these and other the like variations from the original institution of churches, which came in partly by inadvertency unto the rule, and partly were received from the advantages and accommodations which they pretended unto, the state of the churches continued congregational only for two hundred years, so far as can be gathered from the remaining monuments of those times. Only we must yet add, that we are no way concerned in testimonies or sayings taken from the writings of those in following ages as unto the state, way, and manner of the churches in this season, but do appeal unto their own writings only; this is the great artifice whereby Baronius in his Annals would impose upon the credulity of men, an apprehension of the antiquity of any of their Roman inventions; he affixeth them unto some of the first ages, and giving some countenance unto them, it may be from some spurious writings, lays the weight of confirmation on testimonies and sayings of writers, many years, yea, for the most part, ages afterward, for it was and is of the latter ages of the church, wherein use and custom have wrested ecclesiastical words to other significations than at first they were applied unto, to impose the present state of things among them, on these who went before who knew nothing of them.

I shall therefore briefly inquire into what representation is made of the state of the churches by the writers themselves, who lived in the season inquired after, or in the age next unto it, which was acquainted with their practice.

That which first offereth itself unto us, and which is an invaluable testimony of the state of the first churches immediately after the decease of the apostles, is the epistle of Clemens Romanus unto the brethren of the church of Corinth. This epistle, according to the title of it, Irenæus ascribes unto the whole church at Rome, and calls it, 'potentissimas literas; sub hoc Clemente dissensione non modica inter eos qui Corinthi erant fratres facta scripsit quæ est Romæ ecclesia, potentissimas literas;' lib. 3. cap. 3. By Eusebius it is termed *μεγάλη καὶ θαυμασία*, 'great and admirable;' who also affirms that it was publicly read in some churches; Eccles. Hist. lib. 3. cap. 14. And again he calls

it, Ἱκανωτάτην γραφὴν, a 'most powerful writing;' lib. 5. cap. 7.

There is no doubt but some things in the writings of it did befall him 'humanitus,' that the work of such a companion of some of the apostles as he was, might not be received as of divine institution; such was the credit which he gives unto the vulgar fable of the phœnix. But for the substance of it, it is such as every way becomes a person of an apostolical spirit, consonant unto the style and writings of the apostles themselves; a precious jewel and just representation of the state and order of the church in those days. And sundry things we may observe from it.

1. There is nothing in it that gives the least intimation of any other church-state, but that which was congregational, although there were the highest causes and reasons for him so to do, had there been any such churches then in being. The case he had in hand was that of ecclesiastical sedition or schism in the church of Corinth; the church or body of the brethren having unjustly deposed their elders, as it should seem, all of them. Giving advice herein unto the whole church, using all sorts of arguments to convince them of their sin, directing all probable means for their cure, he never once sends them to the bishop or church of Rome, as the head of unity unto all churches; makes no mention of any metropolitical or diocesan church and its rule, or of any single bishop and his authority. No one of any such order doth he either commend, or condemn, or once address himself unto with either admonitions, exhortations, encouragements, or directions. He only handles the cause by the rule of the Scripture, as it was stated between the church itself and its elders. I take it for granted, that if there were any church at Corinth consisting of many congregations in the city and about it, or comprehensive as some say of the whole region of Achaia, that there was a single officer or bishop over that whole church. But none such is here mentioned. If there were any such, he was either deposed by the people, or he was not. If he were deposed, he was only one of the presbyters; for they were only presbyters that were deposed. If he were not, why is he not once called on to discharge his duty in curing of that schism, or blamed for his neglect? Certainly there was never greater prevarication used by any

man, in any cause, than is by Clemens in this, if the state of the church, its rule and order were such as some now pretend. For he neither lets the people know wherein their sin and schism did lie, namely, in a separation from their bishop, nor doth once mention the only proper cure and remedy of all their evils. But he knew their state and order too well, to insist on things that were not then 'in rerum natura,' and wherein they were not concerned.

2. This epistle is written, as unto the whole church at Corinth, so in the name of the whole church of Rome. Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ παροικοῦση Ῥώμην, τῇ ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ παροικοῦση Κόρινθον: 'The church of God which dwelleth' (or sojourneth as a stranger) 'at Rome,' in the city of Rome; 'to the church of God that dwelleth' or sojourneth 'at Corinth.' For although that church was then in disorder, under no certain rule, having cast off all their elders, &c. yet the church of Rome not only allows it to be a sister church, but salutes the brethren of it in the following words; Κλητοῖς, ἡγιασμένοις ἐν θελήματι Θεοῦ, διὰ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμων Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ: 'Called and sanctified through the will of God by our Lord Jesus Christ.' The churches of Christ were not so ready in those days to condemn the persons, nor to judge the church-state and condition of others, on every miscarriage, real or supposed, as some have been and are in these latter ages.

2. This address being from the body of the church at Rome unto that at Corinth, without the least mention of the officers of them in particular; it is evident that the churches themselves, that is, the whole entire community of them, had communion with one another, as they were sister churches; and that they had themselves the transaction of all affairs wherein they were concerned, as they had in the days of the apostles. Acts xv. 1—3. It was the brethren of the church at Antioch who determined that Paul, and Barnabas, and certain others should go up to Jerusalem to consult the apostles and elders. See also chap. xxi. xxii. This they did not, nor ought to do, without the presence, guidance, conduct, and consent of their elders or rulers where they had any. But this they were now excluded from. And that church, the whole body or fraternity whereof doth advise and consult in those things wherein they are concerned,

on the account of their communion with other churches, is a congregational church, and no other. It was the church who sent this epistle unto the Corinthians; Claudius, Ephebus, Valerius, Bibo, Fortunatus, are named[a] as their messengers; τοὺς ἀπεσταλμένους ἀφ' ἡμῶν, 'that are sent by us,' our messengers, our apostles in these matters; such as the churches made use of on all such occasions in the apostles' days. 2 Cor. viii. 23. And the persons whom they sent were only members of the church, and not officers; nor do we any where hear of them under that character. Now they could not be sent in the name of the church, but by its consent; nor could the church consent, without its assembling together.

This was the state and order of the first churches; in that communion which was amongst them, according to the mind of Christ, they had a singular concern in the welfare and prosperity of each other, and were solicitous about them in their trials. Hence those who were planted at a greater distance than would allow frequent personal converse with their respective members, did on all occasions send messengers unto one another; sometimes merely to visit them in love, and sometimes to give or take advice. But these things, as indeed almost all others that belong unto the communion of churches, either in themselves, or with one another, are either utterly lost and buried, or kept above ground, in a pretence of episcopal authority; churches themselves being wholly excluded from any concernment in them. But as the advice of the church of Rome was desired in this case by the whole church of Corinth (περὶ τῶν ἐπιζητουμένων παρ' ὑμῖν πραγμάτων); so it was given by the body of the church itself, and sent by messengers of their own.[b]

3. The description given of the state, ways, and walking of the church of Corinth,[c] that is, that whole fraternity of the church, which fell afterward into that disorder which is reproved, before their fall, is such, as that it bespeaks their walking together in one and the same society, and is sufficient to make any good man desire, that he might see churches yet in the world, unto whom, or the generality of whose members, that description might be honestly and justly accommodated. One character which is given of

[a] Page 73. [b] Page 1. [c] Pages 2—4

them I shall mention only. Πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου ἔκχυσις ἐπὶ πάντας ἐγίνετο. μεσοίτε ὁσίας βουλῆς, ἐν ἀγαθῇ προθυμίᾳ μετ' εὐσεβοῦς πεποιθήσεως ἐξιτείνατε τὰς χεῖρας ὑμῶν προς τὸν παντοκράτορα Θεὸν, ἱκετεύοντες αὐτὸν ἵλεως γίνεσθαι, εἴτε ἄκοντες ἡμάρτητε. Ἀγὼν ἦν ὑμῖν ἡμέρας τε καὶ νυκτὸς ὑπὲρ πασῆς τῆς ἀδελφότητος, εἰς τὸ σώζεσθαι μετ' ἐλέους καὶ συνειδήσεως, τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν αὐτοῦ. 'There was a full' (or plentiful) 'effusion of the Holy Ghost upon you all; so that being full' (or filled) 'with a holy will' (holiness of will) 'and a good readiness of mind, with a pious devout confidence, you stretched out your hands in prayers to almighty God, supplicating his clemency' (or mercy) 'for the pardon of your involuntary sins' (sins fallen into by infirmity, or the surprisals of temptations not consented to, nor delighted or continued in); 'your labour or contention of spirit' (Ἀγὼν ἦν ὑμῖν, as the apostle speaks, ἡλίκον ἀγῶνα ἔχω, Col. ii. 1.) 'was night and day' (in your prayers) 'for the whole brotherhood' (that is, especially of their own church itself), 'that the number of God's elect might be saved in mercy, through a good conscience towards him.

This was their state, this was their liturgy, this their practice. (1.) There was on all the members of the church a plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit in his gifts and graces; wherein, it may be, respect is had unto what was affirmed by the apostle before of the same church; 1 Cor. i. 4—7. the same grace being yet continued unto them. (2.) By virtue of this effusion of the Spirit on all of them, their wills and affections being sanctified, their minds were enabled to pour forth fervent prayers unto God. (3.) They were not such as lived in any open sin, or any secret sin, known to be so, but were only subject unto involuntary surprisals, whose pardon they continually prayed for. (4.) Their love and sense of duty, stirred them up to labour mightily in their prayers with fervency and constancy, for the salvation of the whole fraternity of elect believers, whether throughout the world, or more especially those in and of their own church.

He that should ascribe these things unto any of those churches, which now in the world claim to be so only, would quickly find himself at a loss for the proof of what he asserts. Did we all sedulously endeavour to reduce and restore churches unto their primitive state and frame, it

would bring more glory to God, than all our contentions about rule and domination.

4. It is certain that the church of Corinth was fallen into a sinful excess, in the deposition and rejection of their elders,[d] whom the church at Rome judged to have presided among them laudably and unblamably, as unto their whole walk and work amongst them. And this they did by the suggestion of two or three envious discontented persons; and as it is probable from some digressions in the epistle, tainted with those errors which had formerly infested that church, as the denial of the resurrection of the flesh, which is therefore here reflected on. But in the whole epistle, the church is nowhere reproved for assuming an authority unto themselves which did not belong unto them. It seems what Cyprian afterward affirmed was then acknowledged; namely, that the right of choosing the worthy, and of rejecting the unworthy, was in the body of the people. But they are severely reproved for the abuse of their liberty and power. For they had exercised them on ill grounds, by ill means, for ill ends, and in a most unjust cause. He therefore exhorts the body of the church to return unto their duty, in the restoration of their elders; and then prescribes unto them who were the first occasion of schism, that every one would subject themselves unto the restored presbyter; and say, ποιῶ τὰ προστασσόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ πλήθους,[e] 'I will do the things appointed or commanded by the multitude,' the church in the generality of its members. The 'plebs,' the multitude, the body of the fraternity in the church, τὸ πλῆθος, as they were often called in the Scripture, Acts iv. 32. vi. 2. 5. xv. 12. 30. had then right and power to appoint things that were to be done in the church, for order and peace. I do not say they had it without, or in distinction from, their officers, rulers, and guides, but in a concurrence with them, and subordination to them; whence the acts concluded on may be esteemed, and are, the acts of the whole church. This order can be observed, or this can fall out only in a congregational church, all whose members do meet together for the discharge of their duties, and exercise of their discipline. And if no more may be considered in it but the miscarriage of the people, without

[b] Pages 57, 58. 62. [c] Page 69.

any respect to their right and power, yet such churches as wherein it is impossible that that should fall out in them, as did so fall out in that church, are not of the same kind or order with it.

But for the sake of them who may endeavour to reduce any church-state into its primitive constitution, that they may be cautioned against that great evil which this church, in the exercise of their supposed liberty fell into, I cannot but transcribe a few of those excellent words which are used plentifully with cogent reasons in this epistle[f] against it. Αἰσχρὰ, ἀγαπητοὶ, καὶ λίαν αἰσχρὰ, καὶ ἀνάξια τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ἀγωγῆς ἀκούεται, τὴν βεβαιοτάτην καὶ ἀρχαίαν Κορινθίων ἐκκλησίαν, δι' ἕν ἢ δύο πρόσωπα στασιάζειν πρὸς τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους. 'It is shameful, beloved, exceeding shameful which is reported of you, that the most firm and ancient church of the Corinthians, should for the sake of one or two persons, seditiously tumultuate against their elders.' And herein he proceeds to declare the dreadful scandal that ensued thereon, both among believers and infidels. The instruction also which he adds hereunto is worthy the remembrance of all church members; ἤτω τὶς πιστος, ἤτω δυνατὸς γνῶσιν ἐξειπεῖν, ἤτω σόφος ἐν δικαία κρίσει λόγων, ἤτω ἁγνὸς ἐν ἔργοις· τοσούτω μᾶλλον ταπεινοφρεῖν ὀφείλει, ὅσω δοκεῖ μᾶλλον μείζων εἶναι. It is blessed advice for all church members that he gives; 'Let a man be faithful, let him be powerful in knowledge or the declaration of it; let him be wise to judge the words or doctrines; let him be chaste or pure in his works; the greater he seems to be, the more humble he ought to be: that so the church may have no trouble by him nor his gifts.' But to return.

5. Having occasion to mention the officers of the church, he nameth only the two ranks of bishops and deacons,[g] as the apostle also doth, Phil. i. 1. Speaking of the apostles, he says, Κατὰ χώρας καὶ πόλεις κηρύσσοντες, καθίστανον τὰς ἀπαρχὰς αὐτῶν, δοκιμάσαντες τῷ πνεύματι εἰς ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους τῶν μελλόντων πιστεύειν. 'Preaching the word through regions and cities, they appointed the first-fruits' (as the house of Stephanas was the first-fruits of Achaia, who therefore addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints, 1 Cor. xvi. 15.) 'or the first converts to the faith,

[f] Page 62. [g] Pages 54, 55.

after a spiritual trial of them' (as unto their fitness for their work), 'to be bishops and deacons of them that should afterward believe.' Where there were as yet but a few converted, the apostles gathered them into church-order; and so soon as they found any fit among them, appointed and ordained them to be bishops and deacons, so that provision might be made for the guidance and conduct of them that should be converted and added unto them, after they were left by the apostles. These bishops he affirms to be, and have been the presbyters or elders of the church,[h] even the same with those deposed by the Corinthians, in the same manner as the apostle doth, Acts xx. 28. Ἁμαρτία γὰρ οὐ μικρὰ ἡμῖν ἔσται, ἐὰν τοὺς ἀμέμπτως ὁσίως προσηνέγκαντας τὰ δῶρα τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς ἀποβάλωμεν· μακάριοι δὲ προοδοπορήσαντες πρεσβύτεροι, &c. 'It is no small sin in us to reject or cast off them who have offered the gifts' (or discharged the duties) 'of episcopacy holily and without blame. Blessed are the elders who went before;' namely, as he expresseth it, because they are freed from that emotion from their office, which those elders now amongst them had undergone, after they had duly discharged the office of episcopacy. Other distinction and difference of ordinary officers, besides that of bishops, or elders and deacons, the church in Rome at those days knew not. Such ought to be in every particular church. Of any one single person to preside over many churches, which is necessary unto the constitution of a church-state distinct from that which is congregational, Clemens knew nothing in his days; but gives us such a description of the church and its order as is inconsistent with such a pretence.

6. I shall add no more from this excellent epistle, but only the account given in it, of the first constitution of officers in the churches. Καὶ δὲ ἀποστολοι ἡμῶν ἔγνωσαν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅτι ἔρις ἔσται ἐπι τοῦ ὀνόματος τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς, διὰ ταύτην οὖν τὴν αἰτίαν πρόγνωσιν εἰληφότες τελείαν, κατεστησαν τους προειρημένους, καὶ μεταξὺ ἐπινομην δεδώκασιν, ὅπως ἐὰν κοιμηθῶσιν, διαδέξωνται ἕτεροι, δεδοκιμασμένοι ἄνδρες, τὴν λειτουργίαν αὐτῶν, τοὺς οὖν καταστα θέντας ἐπ' ἐκείνων, ἢ μεταξὺ ὑφ' ἑτέρων ἐλλογίμων ἀνδρῶν, συνευδοκησάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας πάσας, κλ. 'Our apostles, therefore, knowing by our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would contention arise

[h] Pages 57, 58.

about the name of episcopacy' (that is, episcopacy itself); 'for this cause, being endued with a perfect foresight of things, they appointed those forementioned' (their first converts, unto the office of the ministry), 'for the future describing or giving order about the course of the ministry, that other approved men might succeed them in their ministry. These' (elders) 'therefore who were so appointed by them, and afterward by other famous men, with the consent of the whole church,' &c.

Sundry things we may observe in this discourse. 1. The apostles foresaw there would be strife and contention about the name of episcopacy; that is, the office itself, and those who should possess it. This episcopacy was that office which the deposed elders had well discharged in the church of Corinth. This they might foresee from the nature of the thing itself, the inclination of men unto preeminence, and the instance they had seen in their own days, in such as Diotrephes, with the former division that had been in this very church about their teachers. 1 Cor. i. 12. But moreover, they were instructed in the knowledge of it by our Lord Jesus Christ, through his divine Spirit abiding with them and teaching them all things. This therefore they sought by all means to prevent, and that two ways: (1.) In that for the first time themselves appointed approved persons unto the office of the ministry; not that they did it of themselves without the consent and choice of the church whereunto any of them were appointed, for this was directly contrary unto their practice. Acts i. 15. 22, 23. 26. vi. 3. xiv. 23. But that the peace and edification of the churches might be provided for, they themselves spiritually tried and approved of fit persons so to lead the church in their choice. Wherefore, that which is added afterward, 'of the consent of the whole church,' is to be referred unto those who were ordained by the apostles themselves. (2.) They gave rules and orders, namely, in their writings concerning the offices and officers that were to be in the church, with the way whereby they should be substituted into the place and room of them that were deceased, as we know they have done in their writings. (3.) After this was done by the apostles, other excellent persons, as the evangelists, did the same. These assisted the churches in the ordination and choice of

their officers according unto the rules prescribed by the apostles. And I know not but that the eminent pastors of other churches who usually gave their assistance in the setting apart and ordination of others unto the ministry, be intended.

I have insisted long on this testimony, being led on by the excellency of the writing itself. Nothing remains written so near the times of the apostles; nor doth any that is extant which was written afterward, give such an evidence of apostolical wisdom, gravity, and humility. Neither is there in all antiquity, after the writings of the apostles, such a representation of the state, order, and rule of first evangelical churches. And it is no small prejudice unto the pretensions of future ages, that this apostolical person handling a most weighty ecclesiastical cause, makes not the least mention of such offices, power, and proceedings, as wherein some would have all church-rule and order to consist.

The epistle of Polycarpus, and the elders of the church at Smyrna with him, unto the church of the Philippians, is the next on the roll of antiquity. Nothing appears in the whole to intimate any other church-state or order than that described by Clemens. The epistle is directed unto the whole church at Philippi, not unto any particular bishop. *Πολύκαρπος, καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ πρεσβύτεροι τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῇ παροικούσῃ Φιλίπποις.* This was the usual style of those days, so was it used as we have seen by Clemens; *Ἐκκλησία ἡ παροικοῦσα Ῥώμην*: so it was used presently after the death of Polycarpus by the church at Smyrna, in the account they gave unto other churches of his death and martyrdom; *ἡ Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ παροικοῦσα Σμύρναν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ παροικούσῃ ἐν Φιλομελίῳ.* And the same was the inscription of the epistle of the churches at Vienna, and Lyons in France, unto the churches in Phrygia, as we shall see immediately. And these are plain testimonies of that communion among the churches in those days which was held in and by the body of each church, or the community of the brotherhood, which is a clear demonstration of their state and order. And those whom the apostle, writing to the Philippians, calls their bishops and deacons, Polycarpus calls their presbyters and deacons. 'It behoves you,' saith he unto the church there, 'to abstain from these things, *ὑποτασσο-*

μένοις τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις καὶ διακόνοις, being subject unto the elders and deacons.' Nor doth he mention any other bishop among the Philippians. And it may be observed, that in all these primitive writings there is still a distinction made, after the example of Scripture, between the church and the guides, rulers, bishops, or elders of it. And the name of the church is constantly assigned unto the body of the people, as distinct from the elders; nowhere to the bishops or elders as distinct from the people; though the church, in its complete state, comprehendeth both sorts.

Unto this time, that is, about the year 107 or 108, do belong the epistles ascribed unto Ignatius, if so be they were written by him. For Polycarpus wrote his epistle to the Philippians after Ignatius was carried to Rome, having wrote his epistle before in Asia. Many are the contests of learned men about those epistles which remain, whether they are genuine, or the same that were written by him; for that he did write epistles unto sundry churches is acknowledged by all. And whereas there have in this age been two copies found and published of those epistles, wherein very many things that were obnoxious unto just exception in those before published do not at all appear, yet men are not agreed which of them ought to be preferred; and many yet deny that any of them were those written by Ignatius. I shall not interpose in this contest; only I must say, that if any of his genuine writings do yet remain, yet the corruption and interpolation of them for many ages must needs much impair the authority of what is represented in them as his; nor am I delivered from these thoughts by the late, either more sound or more maimed, editions of them. And the truth is, the corruption and fiction of epistolical writings in the first ages was so intolerable, as that very little in that kind is preserved sincere and unquestionable. Hence Dionysius, the bishop of Corinth, complained that in his own time his own epistles were so corrupted by additions and detractions, so as that it seems he would have them no more esteemed as his. Euseb. Ecclesiast. Hist. lib. 4. cap. 22.

But yet because these epistles are so earnestly contended for by many learned men as the genuine writings of Ignatius, I shall not pass by the consideration of them as

unto the argument in hand. I do therefore affirm, that in these epistles (in any edition of them), there is no mention made or description given of any church or church-state, but only of that which is congregational, that is, such a church as all the members whereof did meet and were obliged to meet for divine worship and discipline in the same place. What was the distinction they observed among their officers, of what sort they were, and what number, belongs not unto our present inquiry; our concernment is only this, that they did preside in the same particular church, and were none of them bishops of more churches than one, or of any church that should consist of a collection or association of such particular churches as had no bishops, properly so called, of their own.

All these epistles, that is, the seven most esteemed, were written, as that of Clemens, unto the bodies or whole fraternity of the churches, unto whom they are directed in distinction from their bishops, elders, and deacons, excepting that only unto Polycarpus, which is unto a single person. Under that consideration, namely, of the entire fraternity in distinction from their officers, doth he address unto them, and therein doth he ascribe and assign such duties unto them as could not be attended unto, nor performed, but in the assembly of them all. Such is the direction he gives unto the church of the Philadelphians, how and in what manner they should receive penitents returning unto the church, that they might be encouraged into that duty by their benignity and patience: and many things of the like nature doth he deal with them about. And this assembling together in the same place, namely, of the whole church, he doth frequently intimate and express. Some instances hereof we may repeat.

Πάντες ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ ἅμα συνεχέθε μία δέησις ἔστω κοινὴ. 'Meet all of you together in the same place; let there be one prayer in common of all.' Epist. ad Magnes. This direction can be given unto no other but a particular church. And again to the Philadelphians; Ὅπου ὁποιτὴν ἔστιν ἐκεῖ ὡς πρόβατα ἀκολουθεῖτε. 'Where your pastor is, there follow you as sheep.' And how they may do so, is declared immediately afterward; Θαρρῶν γράφα τῇ ἀξιοθέῳ ἀγάπῃ ὑμῶν, παρακαλῶν ὑμᾶς μιᾷ πίστει, καὶ ἑνὶ κηρύμματι καὶ μιᾷ

Εὐχαριστίᾳ χρῆσθαι· μία γαρ ἔστιν ἡ σὰρξ τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, καὶ ἓν αὐτοῦ τὸ αἷμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐκχυθέν, εἷς καὶ ἄρτος τοῖς πᾶσιν ἐθρυφθη, καὶ ἓν ποτήριον τοῖς ὅλοις διενεμήθη, ἓν θυσιαστήριον πάσῃ τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ, καὶ εἷς ἐπίσκοπος ἅμα τῷ πρεσβυτερίῳ, καὶ τοῖς διακόνοις τοῖς συνδούλοις μου. 'I write with confidence unto your godly love; and persuade you to use one faith' (or the confession of it), 'one preaching of the word, and one Eucharist, or administration of the holy sacrament. For the flesh of Christ is one, and the blood of Christ that was shed for us is one: one bread is broken to all, and one cup distributed among all; there is one altar to the whole church, and one bishop, with the presbytery, and the deacons my fellow-servants.' Nothing can be more evident than that it is a particular church in its order and assembly for worship in one place that he describes; nor can these things be accommodated unto a church of any other form. And towards the end of the epistle, treating about the churches sending their bishops or others on their occasions, he tells them in particular, Πρέπον ἔστιν ὑμῖν ὡς ἐκκλησία Θεοῦ κειροτονῆσαι ἐπίσκοπον, εἰς τὸ πρεσβεῦσαι ἐκεῖ Θεοῦ πρεσβίαν εἰς τὸ συγχωρηθῆναι αὐτοῖς ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ γενομένοις, καὶ δοξάσαι τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Θεοῦ. 'It becometh you as a church of God, to choose or appoint a bishop, who may perform the embassy of God, that it may be granted unto them to glorify the name of God, being gathered together in one place.' It is somewhat difficult how the church of Philadelphia should choose or ordain a bishop at this time; for they had one of their own, whom Ignatius greatly extols in the beginning of the epistle. Nor was it in their power or duty to choose or ordain a bishop for the church of Antioch, which was their own right and duty alone; nor had the church of Antioch any the least dependance on that at Philadelphia. It may be he intends only their assistance therein, as immediately before he ascribes the peace and tranquillity of the Antiochians unto the prayers of the Philadelphians. For my part, I judge he intends not the proper bishop of either place; but some elder which they were to choose as a messenger to send to Antioch, to assist them in their present condition. For in those days there were persons chosen by the churches to be sent abroad to assist other churches on the like occasions: these were called, ἀποστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν, 2 Cor. viii. 23.

the especial 'apostles of the churches;' as ver. 19. it is said of Luke that he was χειροτονηθεὶς ὑπο τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν, 'chosen and appointed by the churches' for the service there mentioned. Such was this bishop, who was sent on God's errand, to assist the church by his advice and counsel, as unto the continuance of their assemblies unto the glory of God, though at present their bishop was taken from them. In that epistle unto the Ephesians, he lets them know that he rejoiced at their πολυπλήθεια, their 'numerous multitude,' whom he persuades and urgeth unto a common concurrence in prayer with their bishop. Εἰ γὰρ ἑνὸς καὶ δευτέρου προσευχὴ τοσαύτην ἴσχυν, ὥστε τὸν Χριστὸν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἑστάναι, πόσω μᾶλλον ἥτε τοῦ ἐπισκόπου καὶ πάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας προσευχὴ συμφωνος. 'And if the prayers of one or two be so effectual that they bring Christ among them, how much more will the consenting prayer of the bishop and the whole church together? So he again explains his mind towards the end of the epistle; Σπουδάζητε οὖν πυκνότερον συνέρχεσθαι ὅταν γὰρ συνεχῶς ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ γένησθε, καθαριοῦνται αἱ δυνάμεις τοῦ Σατανᾶ: 'Do your diligence to meet together frequently; for when you frequently meet together in the same place, the powers of Satan are destroyed.' And many other expressions of the like nature occur in those epistles. We are no way at present concerned in the controversy about that distinction of bishops and presbyters, which the writer of those epistles doth assert; this only I say, that he doth in none of them take the least notice or give the least intimation of any church-state, but such alone wherein the members of the whole church did constantly meet together in the same place, for the worship of God and communion among themselves. And not only so, but he everywhere, in all his epistles to them, ascribes such duties and rights unto the churches as cannot be observed and preserved but in particular churches only. Nor doth he leave any room for any other church-state whatever. Although, therefore, there might have been, and probably there was, some alterations in the order of the churches from what was of primitive institution, yet was there as yet no such change in their state as to make way for those greater alterations which not long after ensued. For they were not introduced, until through a defect in the multiplication of churches in an equality of power and order, which

ought to have been done, they were increased into that multitude for number of members, and were so diffused as unto their habitations, as made an appearance of a necessity of another constitution of churches, and another kind of rule than what was of original appointment.

Justin Martyr wrote his second Apology for the Christians unto the Roman emperors, about the year 150. It is marvellous to consider how ignorant not only the common sort of the pagans, but the philosophers also, and governors of the nations, were of the nature of Christian churches, and of the worship celebrated in them. But who are so blind as those who will not see? Even unto this day not a few are willingly, or rather wilfully, ignorant of the nature of such assemblies, or what is performed in them, as were among the primitive Christians, that they may be at liberty to speak all manner of evil of them falsely. Hence were all the reports and stories among the heathen, concerning what was done in the Christian conventicles, which they would have to be the most abominable villanies that were ever acted by mankind. Even those who made the most candid inquiry into what they were and did, attained unto very little knowledge or certainty concerning them and their mysteries, as is evident in the epistles of Trajan and Pliny, with the rescript of Adrian unto Minucius Fundanus about them.

In this state of things, this our great and learned philosopher, who afterward suffered martyrdom about the year 160, undertook to give an account unto Antoninus Pius and Lucius, who then ruled the Roman empire, of the nature, order, and worship of the Christian churches; and that in such an excellent manner, as that I know nothing material that can be added unto it, were an account of the same thing to be given unto alike persons at this day. We may touch a little upon some heads of it.

1. He declares the conversion of men unto the faith, as the foundation of all their church-order and worship. *Ὅσοι ἂν πεισθῶσι καὶ πιστευωσιν ἀληθῆ ταῦτα τὰ ὑφ' ἡμῶν διδασκόμενα καὶ λεγόμενα εἶναι, καὶ βιοῦν οὕτως δύνασθαι ὑπισχνῶνται, ἔυχεσθαι τε καὶ αἰτεῖν νηστένοντας παρα τοῦ Θεοῦ των προημαρτημένων ἄφεσιν διδάσκονται ἡμῶν συνευχομένων καὶ συννηστευόντων αὐτοῖς.* 'As many as are persuaded and do be-

lieve the things to be true which are taught and spoken by us, and take upon themselves that they are able to live according to that doctrine, they are taught to seek of God by fasting and prayer, the pardon of their foregoing sins; and we also do join together with them in fasting and prayer for that end.' And herein, (1.) The only means of conversion which he insists upon, is the preaching of the word, or truth of the gospel; wherein they especially insisted on the doctrine of the person and offices of Christ, as appears throughout his whole Apology. (2.) This preaching of the word, or declaration of the truth of the gospel unto the conversion of the hearers, he doth not confine unto any especial sort of persons, as he doth afterward that administration of the holy things in the church; but speaks of it in general as the work of all Christians that were able for it, as doth the apostle, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. (3.) Those who were converted did two things; [1.] They professed their faith or assent unto the truth of the doctrine of the gospel. [2.] They took it on themselves to live according to the rule of it, to do and observe the things commanded by Jesus Christ, as he appointed they should, Matt. xxviii. 18, 19. (4.) To lay a sure and comfortable foundation of their future profession, they were taught to confess their former sins, and by earnest prayer with fastings to seek of God the pardon and forgiveness of them. And, (5.) Herein (such was their love and zeal) those who had been the means of their conversion joined with them for their comfort and edification. It is well known how this whole process is lost, and on what account it is discontinued. But whether it be done so unto the advantage of Christian religion, and the good of the souls of men, is well worth a strict inquiry.

2. In the next place he declares how those who were so converted were conducted unto baptism, and how they were initiated into the mysteries of the gospel thereby.

3. When any was so baptized, they brought him unto the church which he was to be joined unto. Ἡμεῖς δὲ μετὰ τὸ οὕτως λοῦσαι τὸν πεπεισμένον καὶ συνκατατεθειμένον, ἐπὶ τοὺς λεγομένους ἀδελφοὺς ἄγομεν, ἔνθα συνηγμένοι εἰσὶ, κοινὰς εὐχὰς ποιησόμενοι ὑπὲρ τε ἑαυτῶν, καὶ τοῦ φωτισθέντος καὶ ἄλλων πανταχοῦ πάντων εὐτόνως, κλ. 'Him who is thus baptized, who believeth, and is received' (by consent) 'among us'

(or to be of our number), 'we bring him unto those called the brethren, when they are met' (or gathered together), 'for joint prayers and supplications for themselves, and for him who is now illuminated, and all others; with intention of mind,' &c. We have here another illustrious instance of the care and diligence of the primitive church, about the instating professed believers in the communion of the church. That hereon those who were to be admitted made their public confession, we shall afterward declare. And the brethren here mentioned, are the whole fraternity of the church, who were concerned in these things. And Justin is not ashamed to declare by what name they called one another among themselves, even to the heathen, though it be now a scorn and reproach among them that are called Christians.

4. He proceeds to declare the nature of their church meetings or assemblies, with the duties and worship of them. And he tells us first, that they had frequent meetings among themselves: they that have any wealth, saith he, do help the poor; *καὶ συνέσμεν ἀλλήλους αἰεὶ*, 'and we are continually together,' that is, in the lesser occasional assemblies of the brethren; for so in the next place he adds immediately, *Τῇ τοῦ ἡλίου λεγομένῃ ἡμέρᾳ, πάντων κατὰ πόλεις καὶ ἀγροὺς μενόντων ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ συνέλευσις γίνεται.* 'On the day called Sunday, there is a meeting of all that dwell in the towns, and fields, or villages about.' This was the state, the order, the proceeding of the church in the days of Justin; whence it is undeniably evident, that he knew no other church-state or order, but that of a particular congregation, whose members living in any town or city, or fields adjacent, did constantly all of them meet together in one place, the first day of the week, for the celebration of divine worship.

5. In this church he mentions only two sorts of officers, *προεστῶτες* and *διάκονοι*, 'presidents and deacons.' Of the first sort, in the duty of one of their assemblies he mentions but one; *ὁ πρόεστως*, 'the president,' the ruler, the bishop, to whom belonged the administration of all the holy mysteries. And that we may not think that he is called the *προέστως*, with respect unto any pre-eminence over other ministers or elders, like a diocesan bishop, he terms him, *προέστως τῶν ἀδελφῶν*, he that 'presided over the brethren' of that church. Now certainly that church wherein one pre-

sident, elder, presbyter, or bishop, did administer the holy ordinances in one place unto all the members of it, was a particular congregation.

6. The things that he ascribeth unto this leader, to be done at this general meeting of the church every Lord's day, were, (1.) That he prayed; (2.) That after the reading of the Scripture he preached; (3.) That he consecrated the Eucharist; the elements of the bread and wine being distributed by the deacons, unto the congregation; (4.) That he closed the whole worship of the day in prayer.

7. In the consecration of the sacramental elements, he observes that the president prayed at large, giving thanks to God; Εὐχαριστίαν ἐπὶ πολὺ ποιεῖται. So vain is the pretence of some, that in the primitive times they consecrated the elements by the repetition of the Lord's prayer only. After the participation of the Eucharist, there was a collection made for the poor, as he describeth it at large; what was so gathered being committed to the pastor, who took care for the distribution of it, unto all sorts of poor belonging unto the church. Hereunto was added, as Tertullian observes, the exercise of discipline in their assemblies, whereof we shall speak afterward. The close of the administration of the sacrament, Justin gives us in these words, Καὶ ὁ προεστὼς εὐχὰς ὁμοίως καὶ εὐχαριστίας ὅση δύναμις αὐτῷ ἀναπέμπει. 'The pastor again, according to his ability or power, poureth forth or sends up prayers, the people all joyfully crying, Amen,' &c. ὅση δύναμις, that is, as Origin expounds the phrase often used by himself, κατὰ τὴν παροῦσαν καὶ δοθεῖσαν δύναμιν, lib. 8. ad Cels. 'according unto the present ability given unto him.'

This was the state, the order, and the worship of the church, with its method, in the days of Justin Martyr. This and no other is that which we plead for.

Unto these times belongs the most excellent epistle of the churches of Vienna and Lyons in France, unto the brethren in Asia and Phrygia, recorded at large by Eusebius, Hist. lib. 5. cap. 1. Their design in it is, to give an account of the holy martyrs who suffered in the persecution under Marcus Antoninus. I am no way concerned in what state Irenæus was in the church at Lyons, whereon after the writing of this epistle, he was sent to Eleutherius the bishop of

Rome, which he gives an account of, chap. iv. He is indeed in that epistle called a presbyter of the church; although, as some suppose, it was sundry years after the death of Pothinus, whom they call bishop of Lyons, into whose room he immediately succeeded. And Eusebius himself, cap. 8. affirming that he would give an account of the writings of the ancient ecclesiastical presbyters, in the first place produceth those of Irenæus. But these things belong not unto our present contest. The epistle we intend was written by the brethren of those churches, and it was written to the brethren of the churches in Asia and Phrygia, after the manner of the Scripture, wherein the fraternity or body of the church was designed or intended in all such epistles. From them was this epistle, and unto those of the same sort was it written, not from one bishop unto another. And as this manifests the concern of the brotherhood in all ecclesiastical affairs, so with all other circumstances, it evidenceth that those churches were particular or congregational only. Nor is there any thing in the whole epistle that should give the least intimation of any other church-state known unto them. This epistle, as recorded by Eusebius, gives us as noble representation of the spirit and communion that was then among the churches of Christ, being written with apostolical simplicity and gravity, and remote from those titles of honour and affected swelling words, which the feigned writings of that age, and some that are genuine in those that followed, are stuffed withal.

Tertullian, who lived about the end of the second century, gives us the same account of the state, order, and worship of the churches, as was given before by Justin Martyr, Apol. ad Gen. cap. 39. The description of a church he first lays down in these words; 'Corpus sumus de conscientia religionis, et disciplinæ unitate, et spei fœdere:' 'We are a body '(united) 'in the conscience of religion' (or a conscientious observation of the duties of religion), 'by an agreement in discipline' (whereby it was usual with the ancients to express universal obedience unto the doctrine and commands of Christ) 'and in a covenant of hope.' For whereas such a body or religious society could not be united but by a covenant, he calls it 'a covenant of hope;' because the principal respect was had therein unto the things hoped for.

They covenanted together so to live and walk in the discipline of Christ, or obedience unto his commands, as that they might come together unto the enjoyment of eternal blessedness.

This religious body or society, thus united by covenant, did meet together in the same assembly or congregation. 'Corpus sumus, coimus in cœtum et congregationem, ut ad Deum quasi manu facta precationibus ambiamus orantes.' And, 'Cogimur ad divinarum literarum commemorationem,' &c. Designing to declare, as he doth in particular, 'Negotia Christianæ factionis,' as he calls them, or the duties of Christian religion, which in their churches they did attend unto, he lays the foundation in their meetings in the same assembly or congregation.

In these assemblies there presided the elders, that upon a testimony of their meetness unto that office, were chosen thereunto. 'President probati quique seniores, honorem istum non pretio sed testimonio adepti.' And in the church thus met together in the same place, assembly, or congregation, under the rule and conduct of their elders, among other things they exercised discipline, that is, in the presence and by the consent of the whole. 'Ibidem etiam, exhortationes, castigationes, et censura divina. Nam et judicatur magno cum pondere, ut apud certos de Dei conspectu; summumque futuri judicii præjudicium est, si quis ita deliquerit, ut a communicatione orationis et conventus, et omnis sancti commercii relegetur.' The loss of this discipline, and the manner of its administration, hath been one of the principal means of the apostacy of churches from their primitive institution.

To the same purpose doth Origen give us an account of the way of the gathering and establishing churches under elders of their own choosing, in the close of his last book against Celsus. And although in the days of Cyprian, in the third century, the distinction between the bishop in any church eminently so called, and those who are only presbyters, with their imparity, and not only the precedency, but superiority of one over others, began generally to be admitted; yet it is sufficiently manifest from his epistles, that the church wherein he did preside, was so far a particular church, as that the whole body or fraternity of it, was admitted unto all advice in things of common concernment

unto the whole church, and allowed the exercise of their power and liberty in choosing or refusing the officers that were to be set over them.

Some few things we may observe from the testimonies insisted on. As,

1. There is in them a true and full representation of the state, order, rule, and discipline of the churches in the first ages. It is a sufficient demonstration that all those things wherein at the present the state and order of the church are supposed to consist, are indeed later inventions; not merely because they are not mentioned by them, but because they are not so, when they avowedly profess to give an account of that state and order of the church which was then in use and practice. Had there been then among Christians metropolitan archbishops, or bishops diocesan, churches national or provincial, an enclosure of church-power, or ecclesiastical jurisdiction in and for the whole rule of the church, unto bishops and officers utterly foreign unto any pretence of apostolical institution or countenance; had many churches, or many hundreds of churches, been without rule in or among themselves, subject to the rule of any one man, standing in no especial relation unto any of them, with other things of the like nature, been then invented, known, and in use, how could they possibly be excused in passing them over without the least taking notice of them, or given them the honour of being once mentioned by them? How easy had it been for their pagan rulers, unto whom they presented their accounts (some of them) of the state of their churches, to have replied, that they knew well enough there were other dignities, orders, and practices, than what they did acknowledge, which they were either afraid or ashamed to own? But besides this silence, on the other hand, they assert such things of the officers appointed in the church, of the way of their appointment, of the duty of officers in the church, of the power and liberty of the people, of the nature and exercise of discipline, as are utterly inconsistent with that state of these things which is by some pleaded for. Yea, as we have shewed, whatever they write or speak about churches, or their order, can have no being or exercise in any other form of churches, but of particular congregations.

2. That account which they give, that representation which they make of the kind, state, and order of the churches among them, doth absolutely agree with, and answer unto, what we are taught in the divine writings about the same things. There were indeed, before the end of the second century, some practices in and about some lesser things (such as sending the consecrated elements from the assembly unto such as were sick) that they had no warrant for from any thing written or done by the apostles: but as unto the substance of what concerns the state, order, rule, discipline, and worship of evangelical churches, there is not any instance to be given, wherein they departed from the apostolical traditions or institution, either by adding any thing of their own unto them, or omitting any thing that was by them ordained.

3. From this state, the churches did by degrees and insensibly degenerate, so as that another form and order of them did appear towards the end of the third century. For some in the first churches, not applying their minds unto the apostolical rule and practice, who ordained elders in every church, and that not only in cities or towns, but as Clemens affirms, *κατὰ χώρας* in the country villages, many disorders ensued, with respect unto such collections of Christians and congregations, as were gathered at some distance from the first or city church. Until the time of Origen, the example of the apostles in this case was followed, and their directions observed. For so he writes; *Ἡμεῖς ἐν ἑκάστῃ πολει ἄλλο σύστημα πατρίδος, κτισθὲν λόγῳ Θεοῦ επιστάμενοι τοὺς δυνατοὺς λόγῳ καὶ βίῳ ὑγιεῖ χρωμένους ἄρχειν ἐπὶ τὸ ἄρχειν ἐκκλησιῶν παρακαλοῦμεν.*—*Καὶ εἰ ἄρχουσιν οἱ καλῶς ἄρχοντες εν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ, ὑπὸ τῆς κατὰ Θεὸν πατρίδος, λέγω δὲ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ἐκλεγομένοι· ἄρχουσι κατὰ τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ προτεταγμένα.* 'And we knowing that there are other congregations gathered in the towns up and down, by the preaching of the word of God' (or that there is another heavenly city in any town built by the word of God), 'we persuade some that are sound in doctrine and of good conversation, and meet for their rule, to take on them the conduct or rule of those churches; and these whilst they rule within the churches those societies of divine institution by whom they are chosen, they govern

them according to the prescriptions or commands and rules given by God himself.' Adver. Cels. lib. 8.

Those of whom he speaks, ἡμεῖς were the pastors or principal members of the churches that were established. When they understood that in any place distant from them, a number of believers were called and gathered into church-order by the preaching of the word, they presently, according unto their duty, took care of them, inquired into their state and condition, assisting them in particular, in finding out, trying, and recommending unto them, persons meet to be their officers and rulers. These he acknowledgeth to be churches and cities of God, upon their collection by the preaching of the word, antecedently unto the constitution of any officers among them; as the apostles also did. Acts xiv. 22, 23. Wherefore the church is essentially before its ordinary officers, and cannot as unto its continuance depend on any succession of theirs, which they have none, but what it gives unto them. These officers, thus recommended, were chosen, as he tells us, by the churches, wherein they were to preside, and thereon did govern them by the rule of God's word alone.

Hereby was the original constitution and state of the first churches for a good season preserved. Nor was there the least abridgment of the power either of these churches or of their officers, because it may be they were some of them planted in poor country villages. For as no man in the world can hinder, but that every true church hath 'de jure' all the rights and powers that any other church in the world hath or ought to have, or that every true officer, bishop, elder, or pastor, hath not all the power that Christ hath annexed unto that office, (be they at Rome or Eugubium), so there was no abridgment of this power in the meanest of them, as yet attempted.

But this course and duty in many places not long after became to be much omitted; whether out of ignorance or negligence, or unwillingness of men to undertake the pastoral charge in poor country churches, I know not. But so it was, that believers in the regions round about any city, ἐν χώραις, were looked on as those which belonged unto the city churches, and were not settled in particular congregations for their edification, which they ought to have been.

And the councils that afterward ensued, made laws and canons that they should be under the government of the bishops of those city churches. But when the number of such believers was greatly increased, so as that it was needful to have some always attending the ministry among them, they came I know not how to have 'chorepiscopi' among them and over them. The first mention of them is in the synod of Ancyra in Galatia, about the year 314, Can. 13. and mention is again made of them in a synod of Antioch, An. 341, and somewhat before at the council of Neocæsarea, Can. 13. and frequently afterward, as any one may see in the late collections of the ancient canons. I verily believe, nor can the contrary be proved, but that these 'chorepiscopi' at first were as absolute and complete in the office of episcopacy, as any of the bishops of the greater cities, having their name or denomination from the places of their residence; Ἐπισκοποὶ κατὰ χώρας, and not for an intimation of any inferiority in them unto other city bishops. But so it came to pass, that through their poverty and want of interest, their ministry being confined unto a small country parish, and perhaps through a comparative meanness of their gifts or abilities, the city bishop claimed a superiority over them, and made canons about their power, the bounding and exercising of it, in dependance on themselves. For awhile they were esteemed a degree above mere presbyters, who accompanied or attended the bishop of the city church in his administrations; and a degree beneath the bishop himself, in a posture never designed by Christ nor his apostles. Wherefore in process of time, the name and thing were utterly lost, and all the country churches were brought into an absolute subjection unto the city churches; something being allowed unto them for worship, nothing for rule and discipline; whereby the first state of churches in their original institution, sacredly preserved in the first centuries, was utterly lost and demolished.

I shall add but one argument more, to evince the true state and nature of evangelical churches herein, namely, that they were only particular congregations; and that is taken from the duties and powers ascribed in the Scripture unto churches, and the members or entire brotherhood of them. It was observed before, that the epistles of the apo-

stles were written all of them unto the body of the churches, in contradistinction unto their elders, bishops, or pastors; unless it were those that were written unto particular persons by name. And as this is plain in all the epistles of Paul, wherein sometimes distinct mention is made of the officers of the church, sometimes none at all; so the apostle John affirms that he wrote unto the church, but that Diotrephes (who seems to have been their bishop) received him not; at once rejecting the authority of the apostle, and overthrowing the liberty of the church: which example was diligently followed in the succeeding ages. 3 Epist. John, ver. 9. And the apostle Peter, writing unto the churches on an especial occasion, speaks distinctly of the elders, 1 Pet. v. 1, 2. See also Heb. xiii. 24. the body of the epistle being directed to the body of churches. Wherefore all the instructions, directions, and injunctions given in those epistles as unto the exercise of power, or the performance of duty, they are given unto the churches themselves. Now these are such, many of them, as cannot be acted or performed in any church by the body of the people, but that which is congregational only. It were too long here to insist on particulars; it shall be done elsewhere; and it will thence appear, that this argument alone, is sufficient to bear the weight of this whole cause. The reader may, if he please, consider what representation hereof is made in these places compared together, Matt. xviii. 15—18. Acts i. 12. 23. ii. 1. 42. 44. 46. v. 11—13. xi. 21, 22. 25, 26. 28—30. xii. 5. 12. xiv. 26, 27. xv. 1—4. 6. 12, 13. 22, 23. 27, 28. 30. xx. 28. Rom. xv. 5, 6. 14. 25, 26. xvi. 1. 17, 18. 1 Cor. i. 4, 5. chap. v. throughout; xii. 4. 7—9. 11. 15. 18. 28—31. chap. xiv. throughout; xvi. 10, 11. 2 Cor. iii. 1—3. vii. 14, 15. viii. 22—24. ii. 6—11. viii. 5. Ephes. ii. 19—22. v. 11, 12. Gal. vi. 1. Phil. ii. 25—28. Col. i. 1, 2. ii. 3 iii. 16. iv. 9. 12. 16, 17. 1 Thess. v. 11—14. 2 Thess. iii. 6, 7. 14, 15. Heb. xii. 13. x. 24, 25. xii. 15, 16. In these, I say, and other places innumerable, there are those things affirmed of, and ascribed unto, the apostolical churches, as unto their state, order, assemblies, duties, powers, and privileges, as evinces them to have been only particular congregations.

CHAP. VI.

Congregational churches alone suited unto the ends of Christ in the institution of his church.

HAVING given an account of that state and order of the gospel churches which are of divine institution, it is necessary that we declare also their suitableness and sufficiency unto all the ends for which the Lord Christ appointed such churches. For if there be any true proper end of that nature, which cannot be attained in or by any church-state in this or that form, it must be granted that no such form is of divine appointment. Yea, it is necessary not only that such a state as pretends unto a divine original, be not only not contradictory unto, or inconsistent with, such an end, but that it is effectually conducing thereunto, and in its place necessary unto that purpose. This therefore is that which we shall now inquire into; namely, whether this state and form of gospel churches in single congregations be suited unto all those ends for which any such churches were appointed; which they must be on the account of the wisdom of Jesus Christ, the author and founder of them, or be utterly discarded from their pretence. Nor is there any more forcible argument against any pretended church-state, rule, or order, than that it is obstructive unto the souls of men in attaining the proper ends of their whole institution. What these ends are, was in general before declared; I shall not here repeat them, or go over them again, but only single out the consideration of those which are usually pleaded, as not attainable by this way of churches in single congregations only; or that at least they are not suited unto their attainment.

The first of these is mutual love among all Christians, all the disciples of Christ. By the disciples of Christ I intend them, and them only, who profess faith in his person and doctrine, and to hear him, or to be guided by him alone, in all things that appertain unto the worship of God, and their living unto him. If there are any called Christians who in these things choose other guides, call other ministers, hear them in their appointments, we must sever them from our

present consideration, though there are important duties required of us towards them also. But what is alleged is necessary unto the constitution of a true disciple of Christ. Unto all those his great command is mutual love among themselves. This he calls in an especial manner 'his commandment,' and 'a new commandment,' as for other reasons, so because he had given the first absolute great example of it in himself, as also discovered motives unto it, and reasons for it, which mankind before was in the dark unto. And such weight doth he lay on this command, that he declares, the manifestation of the glory of God, his own honour, and the evidence to be given unto the world that we are his disciples, do depend on our obedience thereunto.

To express and exercise this love, in all the acts and duties of it among his disciples, was one end of his appointing them to walk in church relation one unto another, wherein this love is the bond of perfectness. And the loss of this love, as unto its due exercise, is no less a pernicious part of the fatal apostacy of the churches, than is the loss of faith and worship. For hereon is Christendom, as it is usually called, become the greatest stage of hatred, rage, wrath, bloodshed, and mutual desolations, that is in the whole world; so as that we have no way to answer the objection of the Jews, arguing against us from the divine promises of love and peace in the kingdom of the Messiah, but by granting that all these things arise from a rebellion against his rule and kingdom. Now this love in its exercise is eminently preserved in this order of particular churches. For,

1. The principle of their collection into such societies, next unto that of faith in Christ Jesus, is love unto all the saints. For their conjunction being with some of them as such only, they must have a love unto all that are so. And none of them would join in such societies, if their so doing did in any thing impair their love unto all the disciples of Christ, or impede it in any of its operations. And the communion of these churches among themselves, is and ought to be such, as that all of them do constitute as it were one body and common church, as we shall see afterward. And it is one principal duty of them, to stir up themselves in all their members, unto a continual exercise of love towards all

the saints of Christ, as occasion doth require; and if they are defective in this catholic love, it is their fault, contrary to the rule and end of their institution.

2. Unto the constant expression and exercise of this love, there are required, (1.) Present suitable objects unto all the acts and duties of it. (2.) A description and prescription of those acts and duties. (3.) Rules for the right performance and exercise of them. (4.) An end to be attained in their discharge. All these things hath the Lord Christ provided for his disciples, in the constitution and rule of these churches. And a due attendance unto them hath he appointed, as the instance, trial, and experiment of their love unto all his disciples. For whereas any might pretend such a love, yet plead that they know not how nor wherein to express and exercise it, especially as unto sundry duties mentioned in the Scripture as belonging thereunto, he hath provided this way, wherein they cannot be ignorant of the duties of love required of them, nor of suitable objects, rules, and ends for their practice. It were too long to go over these things in particular; I shall only add (what is easily defensible), that gospel love will never be recovered and restored unto its pristine glory, until particular churches or congregations are reformed, and reduced to that exercise of love without dissimulation, which is required in all their members among themselves: for whilst men live in envy and malice, be hateful and hating one another, or whilst they live in an open neglect of all those duties, which the Lord Christ hath appointed to be observed towards the members of that society whereunto they do belong, as a pledge and evidence of their love unto all his disciples, no such thing can be attained. And thus is it in most parochial assemblies, who in the midst of their complaints of the breach of love and union, by some men's withholding communion in some parts of divine worship with them; yet, besides the common duties of civility and neighbourhood, neither know nor practise any thing of that spiritual love, delight, and communion that ought to be amongst them, as members of the same church.

We boast not ourselves of any attainments in this kind; we know how short we come of that fervent love that flou-

rished in the first churches: but this we say, that there is no way to recover it, but by that state and order of particular churches which we propose, and κατὰ τὴν δοθεῖσαν δύναμιν, do adhere unto.

But pretences unto the contrary are vehemently urged, and the clamours unto that end are loud and many. For this way, it is said, of setting up particular congregations, is that which hath caused endless divisions, lost all love and Christian affection among us, being attended with other mischievous consequents, such as the most rhetorical adversaries of it are scarce able to declare; nor could Tertullus himself do it, if he were yet alive. For by this means men not meeting as they used to do, at the administration of the sacrament, and common-prayer, all love is lost among them. I answer,

1. This objection, so far as I am able to observe, is mostly managed by them who seem to know very little of the nature and duties of that love which our Lord Jesus Christ enjoins in the gospel, nor do give any considerable evidence of their living, walking, and acting in the power of it. And as unto what they fancy unto themselves under that name, whereas it is evident from common practice, that it extends no farther but to peaceableness in things civil and indifferent, with some expressions of kindness in their mirth and feastings, and other jovial societies, we are not concerned in it.

2. This objection lies not at all against the thing itself; namely, that all churches of divine institution are congregational, which alone at present is pleaded for; but against the gathering of such societies or congregations, in that state of things which now prevails amongst us. But whereas this depends on principles not yet declared and confirmed, the consideration of this part of the objection must be referred unto another place. I shall only say at present, that it is the greatest and most powerful engine in the hand of Satan, and men of corrupt secular interest, to keep all church reformation out of the world.

But if the way itself be changed (which alone, as absolutely considered, we at present defend), that change must be managed with respect unto some principles contrary unto love and its due exercise, which it doth assert and main-

tain, or some practices that it puts men upon of the same nature and tendency. But this hitherto hath not been attempted, at least not effected.

3. We do not find that a joint participation of the same ordinances at the same time, within the same walls, is in itself either an effect, or evidence, or duty of gospel love, or any means for the preservation or promotion of it. For it was diligently observed in the papacy, when all true evangelical love, faith, and worship were lost. Yea, this kind of communion and conjunction, added unto an implicit dependance on the authority of the church, was substituted in their room, and multitudes were contented with them, as those which did bestead them in their neglect of all other graces and their exercise. And I wish it were not so among others, who suppose they have all the love that is required of them, if they are freed from such scandalous variances with their neighbours, as should make them unfit for the communion.

4. If this be the only means of love, how do men maintain it towards any not of their own parish, seeing they never meet with them at the sacrament of the Lord's supper? And if they can live in love with those of other parishes, why can they not do so with those, who having the same faith and sacraments with them, do meet apart for the exercise of divine worship, in such congregations as we have described? Wherefore,

5. The variance that is pretended to be caused by the setting up of these particular congregations, is a part of that variance which Christ came to send into the world, Matt. x. 34—36. 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.' He was the prince of peace; he came to make peace between God and men; between men themselves, Jews and Gentiles; he taught nothing, enjoined nothing, that in its own nature should have the least inconsistency with peace, or give countenance unto variance. But he declares what would ensue and fall out, through the sin, the darkness, unbelief, and enmity unto the truth, that would continue on some under the

preaching of the gospel, whilst others of their nearest relations should embrace the truth and profession of it. What occasion for this variance is taken from the gathering of these congregations, which the way itself doth neither cause, nor give the least countenance unto, we are not accountable for. Whereas, therefore, there is with those among whom these variances and loss of love thereby are pretended, 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one hope of their calling,' the same truth of the gospel preached, the same sacraments administered; and whereas both the principles of the way, and the persons of those who assemble in distinct corporations for the celebration of divine worship, do lead unto love and the practice of it in all its known duties; all the evils that ensue on this way must be charged on the enmity, hatred, pride, and secular interest of men, which it is not in our power to cure.

2. Another end of the institution of this state is, that the church might be the 'ground and pillar of truth,' 1 Tim. iii. 15. that is, that it might be the principal outward means to support, preserve, publish, declare, and propagate the doctrine or truth of the gospel; especially that concerning the person and offices of Christ, which the apostle subjoins unto this assertion in the next words. That church-state which doth not answer this end, is not of divine institution. But this the ministry of these churches is eminently suited unto. There are three things required in this duty, or required unto this end, that the church be the ground and pillar of truth. (1.) That it preserve the truth in itself, and in the profession of all its members, against all seducers, false teachers, and errors. This the apostle gives in special charge unto the elders of the church of Ephesus, adding the reasons of it, Acts xx. 28—31. This is in an especial manner committed unto the officers of the church, 1 Tim. v. 20. 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. This the ministry of these churches is meet and suited unto. The continual inspection which they may and ought to have into all the members of the church, added unto that circumspection about, and trial of, the doctrines preached by themselves, in the whole body of the church, fits them for this work. This is the fundamental means (on the matter the only outward means) that the Lord Christ hath appointed for the preservation of the truth of the gospel in this world,

whereby the church is the ground and pillar of truth. How this can be done, where churches are of that make and constitution that the officers of them can have no immediate inspection into, or cognizance of, either the knowledge, opinions, and practices of the members of their church, nor the body of the church, know on any evident ground what it is that their principal officer believes and teaches, I know not. By this means was the truth preserved in the churches of the two first centuries, wherein they had no officers but what were placed in particular churches, so as that no considerable error made any entrance among them. (2.) That each church take care that the same truth be preserved entire, as unto the profession of it in all other churches. Their communion among themselves (whereof afterward) is built upon their common ὁμολογία, or profession of the same faith. This therefore it is their duty, and was always their practice to look after, that it was preserved entire. For a change in the faith of any of them, they knew would be the dissolution of their communion. Wherefore when any thing of that nature fell out, as it did in the church of Antioch upon the preaching of the necessity of circumcision, and keeping of the law, whereby the souls of many of the disciples were subverted, the church at Jerusalem on the notice and knowledge of it, helped them with their advice and counsel. And Eusebius tells us, that upon the first promulgation of the heresies and phrensies of Montanus, the faithful, or churches in Asia, met frequently in sundry places, to examine his pretences, and condemn his errors; whereby the churches in Phrygia were preserved. Hist. Eccl. lib. 5. cap. 14. So the same was done afterward in the case of Samosatenus at Antioch whereby that church was delivered from the infection of his pernicious heresy; lib. 7. cap. 26. 28, 29. And this care is still incumbent on every particular church, if it would approve itself to be the ground and pillar of truth. And in like manner Epiphanius giving an account of the original of the heresy of Noetus, a Patropassian, affirms, that the holy presbyters of the church called him, and inquired of his opinion several times; whereon being convicted before the presbytery of enormous errors, he was cast out of the church. Ἀλλὰ μεταξὺ τούτων (when he began to disperse his errors) ἀπὸ τῆς περὶ αὐτὸν ἐνηχήσεως οἱ μακάριοι

πρεσβύτεροι τῆς ἐκκλησίας προσκαλεσάμενοι αὐτὸν ἐξήταζον περὶ τούτων ἀπάντων.—ὁδὲ τὰ πρῶτα ἠρνεῖτο ἐπὶ τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου ἀγόμενος. Epiphanius, Hæres. cont. Noet. Hær. 38. sec. 57.

Hence it was that the doctrine of the church, as unto the substance of it, was preserved entire during the two first centuries, and somewhat after. Indeed, as when the Israelites came out of Egypt, there came along with them a mixed multitude of other people, Exod. xii. 38. which fell to lusting for meat when they came into the wilderness, Numb. xi. 4. to the danger of the whole congregation: so when Christianity was first preached and received in the world, besides those who embraced it sincerely, and were added unto the church, there was a great mixture of stubborn Jews, as the Ebionites; of philosophical Greeks, as the Valentinians and the Marcionites; of plain impostors, such as Simon Magus and Menander, who all of them pretended to be Christians; but they fell a lusting, and exceedingly troubled and perplexed the churches, with an endeavour to seduce them unto their imaginations. Yet none of their abominations could force an entrance into the churches themselves, which, by the means insisted on, were preserved. But when this church-state and order was changed, and another gradually introduced in the room of it, errors and heresies got new advantages, and entered into the churches themselves, which before did only assault and perplex them. For,

1. When prerogative and pre-eminence of any single person in the church began to be in esteem, not a few who failed in their attempts of attaining it, to revenge themselves on the church, made it their business to invent and propagate pernicious heresies. So did Thebulis at Jerusalem, Euseb. lib. 4. cap. 22. and Valentinus, Tertul. ad. Valentin. cap. 4. and Marcion at Rome, Epiphan. Hæres. 42. Montanus fell into his dotage on the same account, so did Novitianus at Rome, Euseb. lib. 7. cap 43. and Arius at Alexandria. Hence is that censure of them by Lactantius, lib. 4. cap. 30. 'Ii quorum fides fuit lubrica, cum Deum nosse se et colere simularent, augendis opibus et honori studentes, affectabant maximum sacerdotium, et a potioribus victi, secedere cum suffragatoribus maluerunt, quam eos ferre præpositos quibus concupierant ipsi ante præponi.'

2. When any of their bishops of the new constitution, whether patriarchal or diocesan, fell into heresies, which they did frequently, and that numbers of them, they had so many advantages to diffuse their poison into the whole body of their churches, and such political interests for their promotion, as that the churches themselves were thoroughly infected with them. It is true, the body of the people in many places did oppose them, withdraw, and separate from them: but it cannot be denied, but that this was the first way and means whereby the churches ceased to be the ground and pillar of truth, many destructive errors being received into them, which did only outwardly assault them, whilst they abode in their first institution. And had not the churches, in process of time, utterly lost their primitive state and order, by coalescing into one papal pretended universal church; the faith itself could never have been so utterly corrupted, depraved, and lost among them, as in the issue it was.

3. To propagate the gospel is in like manner required hereunto. This I acknowledge doth more immediately concern the duty of persons in any church-order, than the order itself. For it must be the work of some particular persons dedicating themselves unto their ministry, as it was in the first churches. 3 John 5—8.

The like may be said of any other public acknowledged end of the institution of churches. If the way pleaded for be not consistent with them all, and the proper means of attaining them, if it be not suited unto their accomplishment, let it be discarded. I shall insist on one more only.

3. Our Lord Jesus Christ hath given that state unto his churches, hath instated them in that order, as that his interest, kingdom, and religion might be carried on in the world without prejudice or disadvantage unto any of the lawful interests of men, especially without any opposition unto, or interfering with, the civil authority or magistracy, which is the ordinance of God; and no church way that doth so, is of his institution. Wherefore, I shall briefly declare what are the principles of those of this way in these things, which are the principles of the way itself which they do profess.

1. Our first general assertion unto this purpose is this; The Lord Jesus Christ taught no doctrine, appointed no

order in his church, gave it no power that is opposite unto, or inconsistent with, any righteous government in this world, of what sort soever it be, of those whereunto government is distributed in reason and practice. His doctrine, indeed, is opposed unto all unrighteousness in and of all men, magistrates and others; but not to the legal rule of magistrates that are unrighteous men. And this opposition is doctrinal only, confirmed with promises and threatenings of eternal things, refusing and despising all outward aids of force and restraint. This rule we allow for the trial of all churches, and their state, whether they be according unto the mind of Christ.

But whereas the Lord Jesus Christ hath taught, commanded, appointed nothing that is contrary unto, or inconsistent with, righteous governments of any sort, if rulers or magistrates shall forbid the observance of what he hath commanded, appointed, and ordered, and then charge it on him or his way, that his disciples cannot, dare not, will not comply with that prohibition, and accuse them thereon of sedition and opposition unto government; they deal injuriously with him, whereof they must give an account. For whereas 'all power is given unto him in heaven and earth,' all nations are his inheritance, all people in his absolute disposal, and it is his pleasure to set up his kingdom in the earth, without which the earth itself would not be continued; he could not deal more gently with the righteous rulers of this world (and he did it, because righteous rule is the ordinance of God), than to order all things so, that whether they receive his law and doctrine or no, nothing should be done in opposition unto them or their rule. And if any of them are not contented with this measure, but will forbid the observance of what he commands, wherein he alone is concerned and not they; this is left to be determined between him and them. In the mean time, when rulers are not able to fancy, much less give a real instance of any one principle, doctrine, or practice in any of the churches of Christ, or any belonging unto them, that is contrary unto, or inconsistent with, the rights or exercise of their rule and government, and yet, shall not only prohibit the doing of those things which he hath commanded, merely with respect unto the spiritual and eternal ends of his kingdom, but shall also

punish and destroy those who will not disown his authority, and comply with their prohibition; it doth scarce answer their interest and prudence. For to what purpose is it, for any to provoke him who is mightier than they, when they have no appearance of necessity for their so doing, nor advantage thereby?

2. In particular, the Lord Christ hath ordained no power nor order in his church, no office or duty that should stand in need of the civil authority, sanction, or force to preserve it, or make it effectual unto its proper ends. It is sufficient to discharge any thing of a pretence to be an appointment of Christ in his church, if it be not sufficient unto its own proper end, without the help of the civil magistrate. That church-state which is either constituted by human authority, or cannot consist without it, is not from him. That ordinance which is in its own nature divine, or is pretended so to be, so far as it is not effectual unto its end without the aid of human authority, is not of him, he needs it not; he will not borrow the assistance of civil authority, to rule in and over the consciences of men, with respect unto their living to God, and coming unto the enjoyment of himself.

The way of requiring the sanction of civil authority unto ecclesiastical orders and determinations, began with the use of general councils in the days of Constantine: and when once it was engaged in and approved, so far as that what was determined in the synods, either as to doctrine, or as unto the rule of the church, should be confirmed by the imperial authority, with penalties on all that should gainsay such determinations; it is deplorable to consider, what mutual havoc was made among Christians upon the various sentiments of synods and emperors. Yet this way pleased the rulers of the church so well, and as they thought eased them of so much trouble, that it was so far improved amongst them, that at last they left no power in or about religion or religious persons unto the civil magistrate, but what was to be exercised in the execution of the decrees and determinations of the church.

It is necessary from this institution of particular churches that they have their subsistence, continuation, order, and the efficacy of all that they act and do as churches, from Christ himself: for whereas all that they are and do is

heavenly, spiritual, and not of this world, that it reacheth nothing of all those things which are under the power of the magistrate, that is, the lives and bodies of men, and all civil interests appertaining to them; and affect nothing but what no power of all the magistrates under heaven can reach unto, that is, the souls and consciences of men; no trouble can hence arise unto any rulers of the world, no contests about what they ought, and what they ought not to confirm, which have caused great disorders among many.

3. In particular also, there neither is nor can be in this church-state the least pretence of power or authority to be acted towards or over the persons of kings or rulers, which should either impeach their right, or impede the exercise of their just authority. For as Christ hath granted no such power unto the church, so it is impossible that any pretence of it should be seated in a particular congregation, especially being gathered on this principle, that there is no church-power properly so called, but what is so seated; and that no concurrence, agreement, or association of many churches, can add a new, greater, or other power or authority unto them than what they had singly before. And what power can such churches act towards kings, potentates, or rulers of nations? Have they not the highest security, that it is utterly impossible that ever their authority, or their persons in the exercise of it, should be impeached, hindered, or receive any detriment from any thing that belongs to this church-state?

These principles, I say, are sufficient to secure Christian religion, and the state, order, and power of churches instituted therein, from all reflections of inconsistency with civil government, or of influencing men unto attempts of its change or ruin. The sum is, Let the outward frame and order of righteous government be of what sort it will, nothing inconsistent with it, nothing intrenching on it, nothing making opposition unto it, is appointed by Jesus Christ, or doth belong unto that church-state which he hath ordained and established.

Two things only must be added unto these principles, that we may not seem so to distinguish the civil state and the church, as to make them unconcerned in each other. For,

1. It is the unquestionable duty of the rulers and go-

vernors of the world, upon the preaching of the gospel, to receive its truth, and so yield obedience unto its commands. And whereas all power and offices are to be discharged for God, whose ministers all rulers be; they are bound in the discharge of their office to countenance, supply, and protect the profession and professors of the truth, that is, the church, according unto the degrees and measures which they shall judge necessary.

2. It is the duty of the church materially considered, that is, of all those who are members of it, in any kingdom or commonwealth, to be usefully subservient, even as Christians, unto that rule which is over them as men, in all those ways, and by all those means, which the laws, usages, and customs of the countries whereof they are, do direct and prescribe. But these things are frequently spoken unto.

There are sundry other considerations whereby it may be evinced, not only that this order and state of gospel churches is not only consistent with every righteous government in the world (I mean that is so in its constitution, though as all other forms it be capable of maleadministration), but the most useful and subservient unto its righteous administration; being utterly incapable of immixing itself, as such, in any of those occasions of the world, or state affairs, as may create the least difficulty or trouble unto rulers. With others it is not so. It is known that the very constitution of the papal church, as it is stated in the canons of it, is inconsistent with the just rights of kings and rulers; and ofttimes in the exercise of its power destructive unto their persons and dominions. And herein concurred the prelatical church-state of England, whilst it continued in their communion, and held its dependance on the Roman church. For although they had all their power originally from the kings of this realm, as the records and laws of it do expressly affirm, 'That the church of England was founded in episcopacy by the king and his nobles;' yet they claimed such an addition of power and authority, by virtue of their office from the papal omnipotency, as that they were ringleaders in perplexing the government of this nation, under the pretence of maintaining of what they called the rights of the church. And hereunto they were enabled, by the very constitution of their church-order, which gave them that power, grandeur,

with political interest, that were needful to effectuate their design. And since they have been taken off from this foundation of contesting kings and princes on their own ecclesiastical authority, and deprived of their dependanceonthe power and interest of the papal see, having no bottom for, or supportment of, their church-state and order, but regal favour and mutable laws; there have on such causes and reasons which I shall not mention, ensued such emulations of the nobility and gentry, and such contempts of the common people, as leave it questionable, whether their adherence unto the government be not more burdensome and dangerous unto it than were their ancient contests and oppositions.

CHAP. VII.

No other church-state of divine institution.

It may be it will be generally granted, I am sure it cannot be modestly denied, that particular churches, or congregations, are of a divine original institution; as also, that the primitive churches continued long in that form or order. But it will be farther pleaded, that granting or supposing this divine institution of particular churches, yet there may be churches of another form and order also, as diocesan or national, that we are obliged to submit unto. For although the apostles appointed that there should be bishops or elders ordained κατὰ πόλιν, that is, in every city and town where Christian religion was received; and Clemens affirmeth, that they did themselves constitute bishops and deacons κατὰ χώρας καὶ πόλεις, in the regions, or villages, and cities; yet there was another form afterward introduced. Theodoret, bishop of Cyprus affirms, that there were eight hundred churches committed to his care, Epist. 113. whereof many were in towns and cities having no bishop of their own. The whole country of Scythia, though there were in it many cities, villages, and fortresses, yet had but one bishop, whose residence was at Tomis, all other churches being under him; as Zozomen declares, lib. 6. cap. 20. So

it is at this day in divers provinces belonging of old unto the Greek church; as in Moldavia and Walachia, where they have one whom they call the ἡγούμενος, the leader or ruler that presides over all the churches in the nation. And this order of things, that there should not be a bishop in smaller churches, was first confirmed in the sixth canon of the council of Sardis, in the year 347.

In answer hereunto I shall do these two things: First, I shall shew that there is no church-order, state, or church form of divine institution, that doth any way impede, take away, or overthrow the liberty, power, and order of particular congregations, such as we have described. Secondly, I shall inquire into the causes of churches of another state or order, as the power of magistrates and rulers, or their own choice and consent.

1. There is no form, order, or church-state divinely instituted, that should annul the institution of particular congregations, or abridge them of their liberties, or deprive them of the power committed unto them.

It is such a church-state alone that we are now concerned to inquire after. Whatever of that kind either is or may be imagined that intrenches not on the state, liberty, and power of particular congregations, is not of our present consideration. Men may frame and order what they please, and what advantage they make thereby shall not be envied unto them, whilst they injure not any of the institutions of Christ. But,

1. These churches, as they are churches, are meet and able to attain the ends of churches. To say they are churches, and yet have not in themselves power to attain the ends of churches, is to speak contradictions, or to grant and deny the same thing in the same breath. For a church is nothing but such a society as hath power, ability, and fitness to attain those ends for which Christ hath ordained churches: that which hath so, is a church; and that which hath not so, is none. Men may, if they please, deny them to be churches, but then I know not where they will find any that are so. For instance, suppose men should deny all the parochial churches in England to be such churches as are intrusted with church-power and administrations, what church in the first instance could they require our commu-

nion withal? Will they say, It is with the national or diocesan churches? Neither of these do, or can, as such, administer sacred ordinances. A man cannot preach nor hear the word but in a particular assembly. The Lord's supper cannot be administered but in a particular congregation; nor any presential local communion of believers among themselves, like that described by the apostle, 1 Cor. xii. and xiv. be otherwise attained. No communion is firstly and immediately required, or can be required with diocesan churches, as such. Wherefore, it is parochial particular churches that we are required to hold communion with. We say, therefore, these parochial churches are either really and truly so endued with church-power and liberty, or they are not. If they are, or are acknowledged so to be, we have herein obtained what we plead for; if they are not, then are we required to join in church-communion with those societies that are not churches; and if we refrain so doing, we are charged with schism; which is to turn religion into ridicule. For,

2. It is utterly foreign to the Scripture, and a monster unto antiquity (I mean that which is pure and regardable in this cause), that there should be churches with a part, half, more or less of church-power, and not the whole, neither in right nor exercise; or that there should be church officers, elders, presbyters or bishops, that should have a partiary power, half or a third part, or less, of that which entirely belongeth unto the office they hold. Let one testimony be given out of the Scripture, or that antiquity which we appeal unto, unto this purpose, and we shall cease our plea. But this is that which our understandings are set on rack withal every day. There is a national church that is intrusted with supreme church-power in the nation whereof it is: here at the entrance we fall into a double disquietment.

For, (1.) We know not as yet what this national church is, here (or in France), nor of what persons it doth consist. (2.) We know not whether this national church have all the power that Christ hath given unto the church, or that there is a reserve for some addition from beyond sea, if things were well accommodated. Then, that there are diocesan churches, whose original, with the causes and occasions of their bounds, limits, power, and manner of administrations,

I think God alone knows perfectly, we do but guess; for there is not one word mentioned of any of their concernments in the Scripture. And we know that these churches cannot be said to have all the power that Christ hath intrusted his church withal, because there is another church, unto which they are in subjection, and on which they do depend; but it seems they have the next degree of power unto that which is uppermost. But whatever their power be, it is so administered by chancellors, commissaries, officials, in such ways, and for such ends, that I shall believe a dissent from them and it to be schism, when I believe it is midnight whilst the sun shines in his full strength and glory. And then we are told of parochial churches, who have this power only, that if we do not in them whatever is required of us, not by them, but those that are put over them, they can inform against us, that we may be mulcted and punished.

3. It will be said that these churches, as such, are indeed originally intrusted and invested with all church rights, power, and authority; but for many weighty reasons are abridged in sundry things of the exercise of them. For who can think it meet, that every single parish should be intrusted with the exercise of all church rule and power among themselves?

Ans. 1. Whose fault is it, that these churches are not meet for the exercise of that power which Christ hath granted unto such churches? If it be from themselves, their negligence, or ignorance, or wickedness, it is high time they were reformed, and brought into that state and condition, wherein they may be fit and able to answer the ends of their institution. 2. They are indeed sorry churches, that are not as meet to exercise all church-power according to the mind of Christ, as the chancellor's court. 3. There is no power pleaded for in congregational churches, but what is granted unto them by the word and constitution of Christ. And who is he that shall take this from them, or deprive them of its exercise, or right thereunto? (1.) It is not done, nor ever was, by Jesus Christ himself. He doth not pull down what himself hath built; nor doth any one institution of his, in the least interfere with any other. It is true, the Lord Christ by his law deprives all churches of their power, yea, of their state, who walk, act, and exercise a power not

derived from him; but set up against him, and used unto such ends as are opposite unto, and destructive of, the ends of church-order by him appointed. But to imagine, that whilst a church claims no power but what it receives from him, useth it only for him, and in obedience unto his commands, that he hath by any act, order, or constitution, taken away that power or any part of it from such a church, is a vain supposition. (2.) Such churches cannot by any act of their own deprive themselves of this right and power. For, [1.] It is committed unto them in a way of trust, which they falsify, if by their own consent they part with it. [2.] Without it they cannot discharge many duties required of them. To part with this power, is to renounce their duty, which is the only way whereby they may lose it. And if it be neither taken from them by any law, rule, or constitution of Christ, nor can be renounced or forgone by themselves; what other power under heaven can justly deprive them of it, or hinder them in its execution? The truth is, the principal means which hath rendered the generality of parochial churches unmeet for the exercise of any church-power, is, that their interest in it, and right unto it, hath been so long unjustly detained from them, as that they know not at all what belongs thereunto; being hidden from them by those who should instruct them in it. And might they be admitted, under the conduct of pious and prudent officers, unto any part of the practice of this duty, in their assemblies, their understanding in it would quickly be increased.

That right, power, or authority, which we thus assign unto all particular churches gathered according unto the mind of Christ, is that, and that only, which is necessary to their own preservation, in their state and purity, and unto the discharge of all those duties which Christ requireth of the church.

Now although they may not justly by any be deprived hereof, yet it may be inquired, whether there may not an addition of ecclesiastical power be made unto that which is of original institution, for the good of the whole number of churches that are of the same communion. And this may be done, either by the power and authority of the supreme magistrate, with respect unto all the churches in his domi-

nion; or it may be so, by the churches themselves, erecting a new power in a combination of some, many, or all of them, which they had not in them singly and distinctly before.

For the power of the magistrate in and about religion, it hath been much debated and disputed in some latter ages. For three hundred years there was no mention of it in the church, because no supreme powers did then own the Christian religion. For the next three hundred years there were great ascriptions unto supreme magistrates to the exaltation of their power, and much use was made thereof among the churches, by such as had the best interest in them. The next three hundred years was, as unto this case, much taken up with disputes about this power, between the emperors and the popes of Rome; sometimes one side gaining the advantage in some especial instances, sometimes the other. But from that period of time, or thereabouts, the contest came to blows, and the blood of some hundred thousands was shed in the controversy, namely, about the power of emperors and kings on the one side, and the popes of Rome on the other. In the issue, the popes abode masters of the field, and continued in actual possession of all ecclesiastical power, though sometimes mixed with the rebellion of one stubborn prince or other, as here frequently in England, who controlled them in some of their new acquisitions. Upon the public reformation of religion, many princes threw off the yoke of the papal rule, and according to the doctrine of the reformers, assumed unto themselves the power which, as they judged, the godly kings of Judah of old, and the first Christian emperors, did exercise about ecclesiastical affairs. From that time there have been great and vehement disputes about the ecclesiastical power of sovereign princes and states. I shall not here undertake to treat concerning it; although it is a matter of no great difficulty to demonstrate the extremes that many have run into, some by granting too much, and some too little unto them. And I shall grant for my part, that too much cannot well be assigned unto them, whilst these two principles are preserved. 1. That no supreme magistrate hath power to deprive or abridge the churches of Christ of any right, authority, or liberty, granted unto them by Jesus Christ. 2. Nor hath any to coerce,

punish, or kill any persons (being civilly peaceable, and morally honest), because they are otherwise minded in things concerning gospel faith and worship than he is.

It hath not yet been disputed, whether the supreme magistrate hath power to ordain, institute, and appoint, any new form or state of churches, supposedly suited unto the civil interest, which were never ordained or appointed by Christ. It hath not, I say, been disputed under these terms expressly, though really the substance of the controversy lies therein. To assert this expressly, would be to exalt him above Jesus Christ; at least to give him power equal unto his; though really unto the institution of the gospel church-state, and the communication of graces, offices, and gifts to make it useful unto its end, no less than all power in heaven and earth be required.

Some plead that there is no certain form of church government appointed in the Scripture; that there was none ordained by Christ, nor exemplified by the apostles, and therefore it is in the power of the magistrate to appoint any such form thereof, as is suited unto the public interest. It would seem to follow more evidently, that no form at all should by any be appointed; for what shall he do that cometh after the king? what shall any one ordain in the church, which the Lord Christ thought not meet to ordain? And this is the proper inference from this consideration: such a church-government as men imagine, Christ hath not appointed; therefore neither may men do so. But suppose that the Lord Christ hath appointed a church-state, or that there should be churches of his disciples on the earth; let them therein but yield obedience unto all that he hath commanded; and in their so doing, make use of the light of nature, and rules of common prudence, so as to do it unto their own edification (which to deny to be their duty, is to destroy their nature as created of God), trusting in all things unto the conduct of the promised divine assistance of the Holy Spirit: if any instance can be given of what is wanting unto the complete state and rule of the church, we shall willingly allow that it be added by the civil magistrate, or whosoever men can agree upon, as was before declared. If it be said, there is yet something wanting to accommodate these churches and their rule unto the state of the public in-

terest, and political government under which they are placed, whereon they may be framed into churches diocesan and metropolitical, with such a rule as they are capable of; I say, 1. That in their original constitution, they are more accommodated unto the interest of all righteous secular government, than any arbitrary moulding them unto a pretended meetness to comply therewithal, can attain unto. This we have proved before, and shall farther enlarge upon it, if it be required. And we find it by experience, that those additions, changes, and alterations in the state, order, and rule of the churches, pretended for the end mentioned, have proved the cause of endless contentions, which have no good aspect on the public peace, and will assuredly continue for ever so to be. 2. It is granted that the magistrate may dispose of many outward concerns of these churches; may impart of his favour to them, or any of them, as he sees cause; may take care that nothing falls out among them that may occasion any public disturbance, in and by itself; may prohibit the public exercise of worship idolatrous or superstitious; may remove and take away all instruments and monuments of idolatry; may coerce, restrain, and punish, as there is occasion, persons who under pretence of religion, do advance principles of sedition, or promote any foreign interest, opposite and destructive to his government, the welfare of the nation, and the truth of religion; with sundry things of the like nature. And herein lies an ample field, wherein the magistrate may exercise his power and discharge his duty.

It cannot well be denied, but that the present pretences and pleas of some to reduce all things in the practice of religion into the power and disposal of the civil magistrate, are full of offence and scandal. It seems to be only a design and contrivance, to secure men's secular interests under every way of the profession of Christian religion, true or false, which may have the advantage of the magistrate's approbation. By this device, conscience is set at liberty from concerning itself in an humble diligent inquiry into the mind of God, as unto what is its duty in his worship. And when it is so with the conscience of any, it will not be much concerned in what it doth attend unto or observe. What is in divine things done or practised solely on the

authority of the magistrate, is immediately and directly obedience unto him, and not unto God.

Whatever therefore the supreme power in any place may do, or will be pleased to do, for the accommodation of the outward state of the church, and the exercise of its rule, unto the political government of a people or nation, yet these two things are certain :

1. That he can form, erect, or institute no new church-state, which is not ordained and appointed by Christ and his apostles, by virtue of his authority; and what he doth of that nature appoint, is called a church only equivocally, or by reason of some resemblance unto that which is properly so called.

2. To dissent from what is so appointed by the supreme power, in and about the state, form, rule, and worship of churches, whatever other evil it may be charged with, or supposed liable unto, can have nothing in it of that which the Scripture condemns under the name of schism, which hath respect only unto what is stated by Christ himself.

That which in this place we should next inquire into is, what these particular churches themselves may do, by their own voluntary consent and act in a way of association or otherwise, for the accumulation and exercise of a power, not formally inherent in them, as particular churches; but I shall refer it unto the head of the communion of churches, which must be afterward spoken unto.

CHAP. VIII.

The duty of believers to join themselves in church-order.

Unto some one or other of those particular congregations which we have described, continuing to be the ground and pillar of truth, it is the duty of every believer, of every disciple of Christ, to join himself, for the due and orderly observation and performance of the commands of Christ, unto the glory of God, and their own edification. Matt. xxviii. 18—20.

This in general is granted by all sorts and parties of men;

the grant of it is the ground whereon they stand in the management of their mutual feuds in religion, pleading that men ought to be of, or join themselves unto, this or that church, still supposing that it is their duty to be of one or another.

Yea, it is granted also, that persons ought to choose what churches they will join themselves unto, wherein they may have the best advantage unto their edification and salvation. They are to choose, to join themselves, unto that church which is in all things most according to the mind of God.

This it is supposed is the liberty and duty of every man; for if it be not so, it is the foolishest thing in the world for any to attempt to get others from one church unto another; which is almost the whole business of religion, that some think themselves concerned to attend unto.

But yet notwithstanding these concessions, when things come to the trial in particular, there is very little granted in compliance with the assertion laid down. For besides that it is not a church of divine institution that is intended in these concessions, when it comes unto the issue, where a man is born, and in what church he is baptized in his infancy, there all choice is prevented, and in the communion of that church he is to abide, on the penalties of being esteemed and dealt withal as a schismatic. In what national church any person is baptized, in that national church he is to continue, or answer the contrary at his peril. And in the precincts of what parish his habitation falls to be, in that particular parish church is he bound to communicate in all ordinances of worship. I say, in the judgment of many, whatever is pretended of men's joining themselves unto the truest and purest churches, there is no liberty of judgment or practice in either of these things left unto any of the disciples of Christ.

Wherefore the liberty and duty proposed, being the foundation of all orderly evangelical profession, and that wherein the consciences of believers are greatly concerned, I shall lay down one proposition wherein it is asserted, in the sense I intend, and then fully confirm it.

The proposition itself is this:

It is the duty of every one who professeth faith in Christ

Jesus, and takes due care of his own eternal salvation, voluntarily and by his own choice to join himself unto some particular congregation of Christ's institution, for his own spiritual edification, and the right discharge of his commands.

1. This duty is prescribed unto them only who profess faith in Christ Jesus; who own themselves to be his disciples, that call Jesus Lord. For this is the method of the gospel, that first men by the preaching of it be made disciples, or be brought unto faith in Christ Jesus, and then be taught to do and observe whatever he commands; Matt. xxviii. 18—20. first to believe, and then to be added unto the church. Acts ii. 41, 42. 46, 47. Men must first join themselves unto the Lord, or give up themselves unto him, before they can give up themselves unto the church, according to the mind of Christ. 2 Cor. viii. 5. We are not therefore concerned at present as unto them, who either not at all profess faith in Christ Jesus, or else through ignorance of the fundamental principles of religion, and wickedness of life, do destroy or utterly render useless that profession. We do not say it is the duty of such persons, that is, their immediate duty, in the state wherein they are, to join themselves unto any church. Nay, it is the duty of every church to refuse them their communion, whilst they abide in that state. There are other duties to be in the first place pressed on them, whereby they may be made meet for this. So in the primitive times, although in the extraordinary conversions unto Christianity that were made among the Jews, who before belonged unto God's covenant, they were all immediately added unto the church; yet afterward, in the ordinary way of the conversion of men, the churches did not immediately admit them into complete communion, but kept them as catechumeners, for the increase of their knowledge, and trial of their profession, until they were judged meet to be joined unto the church. And they are not to blame who receive not such into complete communion with them, unto whom it is not a present duty to desire that communion. Yea, the admission of such persons into church-societies, much more the compelling of them to be members of this or that church, almost whether they will or no, is contrary to the rule of the word, the example of the primi-

tive churches, and a great expedient to harden men in their sins.

We do therefore avow, that we cannot admit any into our church societies, as to complete membership and actual interest in the privileges of the church, who do not, by a profession of faith in, and obedience unto, Jesus Christ, no way contradicted by sins of life, manifest themselves to be such, as whose duty it is to join themselves unto any church. Neither do we injure any baptized persons hereby, or oppose any of their right unto, and interest in the church, but only as they did universally in the primitive churches, after the death of the apostles, we direct them into that way and method, wherein they may be received unto the glory of Christ, and their own edification. And we do therefore affirm, that we will never deny that communion unto, any person, high or low, rich or poor, old or young, male or female, whose duty it is to desire it.

2. It is added in the description of the subject, that it is such a one who takes due care of his own salvation. Many there are who profess themselves to be Christians, who it may be hear the word willingly, and do many things gladly, yet do not esteem themselves obliged unto a diligent inquiry into, and a precise observation of, all the commands of Christ. But it is such whom we intend, who constantly fix their minds on the enjoyment of God, as their chiefest good and utmost end; who thereon duly consider the means of attaining it, and apply themselves thereunto. And it is to be feared, that the number of such persons will not be found to be very great in the world; which is sufficient to take off the reproach from some particular congregations of the smallness of their number. Such they ever were, and such is it foretold that they should be. Number was never yet esteemed a note of the true church, by any but those, whose worldly interest it is that it should so be; yet at present absolutely in these nations, the number of such persons is not small.

3. Of these persons it is said, that it is their duty so to dispose of themselves. It is not that which they may do as a convenience or an advantage; not that which others may do for them, but which they must do for themselves in a way of duty. It is an obediential act unto the commands of

Christ; whereunto is required subjection of conscience unto his authority, faith in his promises, as also a respect unto an appearance before his judgment-throne at the last day. The way of the church of Rome to compel men into their communion, and keep them in it, by fire and fagot, or any other means of external force, derives more from the Alcoran than the gospel. Neither doth it answer the mind of Christ in the institution, end, and order of church-societies, that men should become members of them, partly by that which is no way in their own power, and partly by what their wills are regulated in, by the laws of men. For it is, as was said, commonly esteemed, that men being born and baptized in such a nation, are thereby made members of the church of that nation; and by living within such parochial precincts, as the law of the land hath arbitrarily established, are members of this or that particular congregation. At least they are accounted so far to belong unto these churches, as to render them liable unto all outward punishments, that shall be thought meet to be inflicted on them who comply not with them. So far as these persuasions, and actings according unto them, do prevail, so far are they destructive of the principal foundation of the external being and order of the church. But that men's joining themselves in or unto any church-society is, or ought to be, a voluntary act, or an act of free choice, in mere obedience unto the authority and commands of Christ, is so sacred a truth, so evident in the Scripture, so necessary from its subject matter, so testified unto by the practice of all the first churches, as that it despiseth all opposition. And I know not how any can reconcile the common practice of giving men the reputation or reality of being members of, or belonging unto, this or that church, as unto total communion, who desire or choose no such thing, unto this acknowledged principle.

4. There is a double joining unto the church: (1.) That which is, as unto total communion, in all the duties and privileges of the church, which is that whereof we treat. (2.) An adherence unto the church, as unto the means of instruction and edification to be attained thereby. So persons may adhere unto any church, who yet are not meet, or free on some present consideration, to confederate with it, as unto total communion, see Acts v. 13, 14. And of this sort, in

a peculiar manner, are the baptized children of the members of the church. For although they are not capable of performing church duties, or enjoying church privileges in their tender years; nor can have a right unto total communion, before the testification of their own voluntary consent thereunto, and choice thereof; yet are they in a peculiar manner under the care and inspection of the church, so far as the outward administration of the covenant, in all the means of it, is committed thereunto; and their duty it is, according to their capacity, to attend unto the ministry of that church whereunto they do belong.

5. The proposition respects a visible professing church. And I intend such a church in general, as avoweth authority from Christ, (1.) For the ministerial preaching of the word; (2.) Administration of the sacraments; (3.) For the exercise of evangelical discipline; and, (4.) To give a public testimony against the devil and the world, not contradicting their profession with any corrupt principles or practices inconsistent with it. What is required in particular, that any of them may be meet to be joined unto such a church, we shall afterward inquire.

6. It is generally said, that out of the church there is no salvation; and the truth hereof is testified unto in the Scriptures, Acts ii. 47. 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21. Matt. xvi. 18. Eph. v. 26, 27. John x. 16.

7. This is true both positively and negatively of the catholic church invisible of the elect: all that are of it shall be saved; and none shall be saved but those that belong unto it. Eph. v. 25—27. Of the catholic visible professing church negatively; that no adult person can be saved, that doth not belong unto this church. Rom. x. 10.

8. This position of truth is abused by interest and pride; an enclosure of it being made by them, who of all Christians in the world can lay the least and weakest claim unto it; namely, the church of Rome. For they are so far from being that catholic church, out of which there is no salvation, and wherein none can perish, like the ark of Noah, that it requires the highest charity to reckon them unto that visible professing church, whereof the greatest part may perish; and do so undoubtedly.

9. Our inquiry is, what truth there is in this assertion,

with respect unto these particular churches or societies for the celebration of gospel worship and discipline, whereof we treat. And I say,

1. No church, of what denomination soever, can lay a claim unto this privilege, as belonging unto itself alone. This was the ancient donatism; they confined salvation unto the churches of their way alone. And after many false charges of it on others, it begins really to be renewed in our days. For some dispute, that salvation is confined unto that church alone, wherein there is a succession of diocesan bishops; which is the height of donatism. The judgments and determinations made concerning the eternal salvation or damnation of men, by the measures of some differences among Christians about churches, their state and order, are absurd, foolish, and impious, and for the most part used by them, who sufficiently proclaim, that they know neither what it is to be saved, nor do use any diligence about the necessary means of it. Salvation depends absolutely on no particular church-state in the world; he knows not the gospel, who can really think it doth. Persons of believers are not for the church, but the church is for them: if the ministry of angels be for them who are heirs of salvation, much more is the ministry of the church so. If a man be an adulterer, an idolater, a railer, a hater and scoffer of godliness; if he choose to live in any known sin, without repentance, or in the neglect of any known duty; if he be ignorant and profane; in a word, if he be not born again from above, be he of what church he will, and whatsoever place he possess therein, he cannot be saved. And on the other side, if a man believe in Christ Jesus, that is, know him in his person, offices, doctrine, and grace; trust unto him for all the ends of the wisdom and love of God towards mankind in him; if he endeavour to yield sincere and universal obedience unto all his commands, and to be conformed unto him, in all things following his example, having for these ends received of his Spirit; though all the churches in the world should reject him, yet he shall undoubtedly be saved. If any shall hence infer, that then it is all one of what church any one is: I answer, (1.) That although the being of this or that, or any particular church in the world, will not secure the salvation of any men; yet the adherence unto some churches, or such as are so called, in

their constitution and worship, may prejudice, yea, ruin the salvation of any that shall so do. (2.) The choice of what church we will join unto, belongs unto the choice and use of the means for our edification. And he that makes no conscience hereof, but merely with respect unto the event of being saved at last, will probably come short thereof.

2. On this supposition, that there be no insuperable difficulties lying in the way of the discharge of this duty, as that a person be cast by the providence of God into such a place or season, as wherein there is no church that he can possibly join himself unto, or that he be unjustly refused communion, by unwarrantable conditions of it, as it was with many during the prevalency of the papacy in all the western empire; it is the indispensable duty of every disciple of Christ, in order unto his edification and salvation, voluntarily, and of his own choice, to join himself in and unto some particular congregation, for the celebration of divine worship, and the due observation of all the institutions and commands of Christ; which we shall now farther confirm.

1. The foundation of this duty, as was before declared, doth lie in the law and light of nature. Man cannot exercise the principal powers and faculties of his soul, with which he was created, and whereby he is enabled to glorify God, which is the end of him and them, without a consent and conjunction in the worship of God in communion and society, as hath been proved before.

2. The way whereby this is to be done, God hath declared and revealed from the beginning, by the constitution of a church-state, through the addition of arbitrary institutions of worship, unto what was required by the law of nature. For this gives the true state, and is the formal reason of a church, namely, a divine addition of arbitrary institutions of worship, unto the necessary dictates of the law of nature, unto that end. And the especial nature of any church-state, doth depend on the especial nature of those institutions, which is constitutive of the difference between the church-state of the Old Testament and that of the New.

3. Such a church-state was constituted and appointed under the Old Testament, founded in and on an especial covenant between God and the people. Exod. xxiv. Unto this church, every one that would please God and walk

before him, was bound to join himself, by the ways and means that he had appointed for that end; namely, by circumcision, 'and their laying hold on the covenant of God;' Exod. xii. 48. Isa. lvi. 4. And this joining unto the church is called, 'joining unto the Lord,' Isa. lvi. 6. Jer. l. 5. as being the means thereof; without which it could not be done. Herein was the tabernacle of God with men, and he dwelt among them.

4. As a new church-state is prophesied of under the New Testament, Ezek. xxxiv. 25—27. Isa. lxvi. 18—22. and other places innumerable; so it was actually erected by Jesus Christ, as we have declared. And whereas it is introduced and established in the place and room of the church-state under the Old Testament, which was to be removed at the time of reformation, as the apostle demonstrates at large in his Epistle to the Hebrews; all the commands, promises, and threatenings given or annexed unto that church-state, concerning the conjunction of men unto it, and walking in it, are transferred unto this of the new erection of Christ. Wherefore, although the state of the church itself be reduced from that which was nationally congregational, unto that which is simply and absolutely so; and all ordinances of its instituted worship are changed, with new rules for the observation of what we are directed unto by the light of nature; yet the commands, promises, and threatenings, made and given unto it as a church, are all in full force with respect unto this new church-state; and we need no new commands to render it our duty to join in evangelical churches, for the ends of a church in general.

5. The Lord Christ hath disposed all the ways and means of edification unto these churches; so that ordinarily, and under an expectation of his presence in them, and concurrence unto their efficacy, they are not otherwise to be enjoyed. Such are the ordinary dispensation of the word, and administration of the sacraments. For any disciple of Christ to live in a neglect of these things, and the enjoyment of them according to his mind, is to despise his care and wisdom, in providing for his eternal welfare.

6. He hath prescribed sundry duties unto us, both as necessary, and as evidences of our being his disciples, such as cannot be orderly performed, but as we are members of

some particular congregation: this also hath been before declared.

7. The institution of these churches, is the way which Christ hath ordained to render his kingdom visible or conspicuous, in distinction from, and opposition unto, the kingdom of Satan and the world. And he doth not in a due manner declare himself a subject in or unto the kingdom of Christ, who doth not solemnly engage in this way. It is not enough to constitute a legal subject of the kingdom of England, that he is born in the nation, and lives in some outward observance of the laws of it, if he refuse solemnly to express his allegiance in the way appointed by the law for that end. Nor will it constitute a regular subject of the kingdom of Christ, that he is born in a place where the gospel is professed, and so professeth a general compliance therewith, if he refuse to testify his subjection, by the way that Christ hath appointed for that end. It is true, the whole nation in their civil relation and subordination according to law, is the kingdom of England; but the representation of the kingly power and rule in it, is in the courts of all sorts, wherein the kingly power is acted, openly and visibly. And he that lives in the nation, yet denies his homage unto these courts, is not to be esteemed a subject. So doth the whole visible professing church, in one or more nations or lesser precincts of people and places, constitute the visible kingdom of Christ; yet is no particular person to be esteemed a legal true subject of Christ, that doth not appear in these his courts with a solemn expression of his homage unto him.

8. The whole administration of the rule and discipline appointed by Christ, is confined unto these churches; nor can they be approved by whom that rule is despised. I shall not argue farther, in a case whose truth is of so uncontrollable evidence. In all the writings of the New Testament, recording things after the ascension of Christ, there is no mention of any of his disciples with approbation, unless they were extraordinary officers, but such as were entire members of these assemblies.

CHAP. IX.

The continuation of a church-state, and of the administration of evangelical ordinances of worship, briefly vindicated.

THE controversy about the continuation of a church-state, and the administration of gospel ordinances of worship, is not new, in this age, though some pride themselves, as though the invention of the error whereby they are denied, were their own: in former ages, both in the papacy, and among some of them that forsook it, there were divers who, on a pretence of a peculiar spirituality, and imaginary attainments in religion, wherein these things are unnecessary, rejected their observation. I suppose it necessary briefly to confirm the truth, and vindicate it from this exception, because though it be sufficiently weak in itself, yet what it is, lies against the foundation of all that we are pleading about. But to reduce things into the lesser compass, I shall first confirm the truth by those arguments or considerations, which will defeat all the pleas and pretences of them by whom it is opposed; and then confirm it by positive testimonies and arguments, with all brevity possible.

First, therefore, I shall argue from the removal of all causes, whereon such a cessation of churches and ordinances is pretended. For it is granted on all hands, that they had a divine original and institution, and were observed by all the disciples of Christ, as things by him commanded. If now, therefore, they cease as unto their force, efficacy, and use, it must be on some of these reasons:

1. Because a limited time and season was fixed unto them, which is now expired. So was it with the church-state and ordinances of old; they were appointed unto the time of reformation; Heb. ix. 10. They had a certain time prefixed unto their duration, according to the degrees of whose approach they waxed old, and at length utterly disappeared; chap. viii. 13. until that time they were all punctually to be observed; Mal. iv. 4. But there were many antecedent indications of the will of God concerning their cessation and abolition, whereof the apostle disputes at large

in his Epistle unto the Hebrews. And from a pretended supposition, that such was the state of evangelical ordinances, namely, that they had a time prefixed unto their duration, did the first opposition against them arise. For Montanus, with his followers, imagined that the appointments of Christ and his apostles in the gospel, were to continue in force only unto the coming of the Paraclete, or the Comforter, promised by him. And adding a new frenzy hereunto, that that Paraclete was then first come in Montanus, they rejected the institutions of the gospel, and made new laws and rules for themselves. And this continues to be the principal pretence of them by whom the use of gospel ordinances is at present rejected, as that which is of no force or efficacy. Either they have received, or do speedily look for such a dispensation of the Spirit, or his gifts, as wherein they are to cease and disappear. But nothing can be more vain than this pretence.

1. It is so as unto the limitation of any time, as unto their duration and continuance. For, (1.) There is no intimation given of any such thing, either in the divine word, promise, declaration about them, or the nature of the institutions themselves. But whereas those of the Old Testament were in time to be removed, that the church might not be offended thereby, seeing originally they were all of immediate divine institution, God did by all manner of ways, as by promises, express declarations, and by the nature of the institutions themselves, foresignify their removal, as the apostle proves at large in his Epistle to the Hebrews. But nothing of this nature can be pretended concerning the gospel church-state or worship. (2.) There is no prediction or intimation of any other way of worship, or serving God in this world, that should be introduced in the room of that established at first; so that upon a cessation thereof, the church must be left unto all uncertainties and utter ruin. (3.) The principal reason why a church-state was erected of old, and ordinances of worship appointed therein, that were all to be removed and taken away, was, that the Son, the Lord over his own house, might have the pre-eminence in all things. His glory it was to put an end unto the law, as given by the disposition of angels, and the ministry of Moses, by the institution of a church-state and ordinances

of his own appointment. And if his revelation of the will of God therein be not complete, perfect, ultimate, unalterable, if it be to expire, it must be, that honour may be given above him, unto one greater than he.

2. It is so, as unto their decay, or the loss of their primitive force and efficacy. For their efficacy unto their proper ends depends on, (1.) The institution of Christ: this is the foundation of all spiritual efficacy unto edification in the church, or whatever belongs thereunto. And therefore, whatever church-state may be framed, or duties, ways, or means of worship appointed by men, that have not his institution, how specious soever they may appear to be, have no spiritual force or efficacy, as unto the edification of the church. But whilst this institution of Christ continues irrevocable, and is not abrogated by a greater power than what it was enacted by, whatever defect there may be as unto faith and obedience in men, rendering them useless and ineffectual unto themselves; however they may be corrupted by additions unto them, or detractions from them, changing their nature and use; in themselves they continue to be of the same use and efficacy as they were at the beginning. (2.) On the promise of Christ, that he will be present with his disciples in the observation of his commands unto the consummation of all things; Matt. xxviii. 20. To deny the continued accomplishment of this promise, and that on any pretence whatever, is the venom of infidelity. If therefore they have an irrevocable divine institution, if Christ be present in their administrations, as he was of old, Rev. ii. 1. there can be no abatement of their efficacy unto their proper ends, in the nature of instrumental causes. (3.) On the covenant of God, which gives an infallible inseparable conjunction between the word, or the church and its institution by the word, and the spirit; Isa. lix. 21. God's covenant with his people is the foundation of every church-state, of all offices, powers, privileges, and duties thereunto belonging. They have no other end, they are of no other use, but to communicate, express, declare, and exemplify on the one hand, the grace of God in his covenant unto his people; and on the other, the duties of his people according unto the tenour of the same covenant unto him. They are the way, means, and instruments appointed of God, for this end, and

other end they have none. And hereon it follows, that if it be not in the power of men, to appoint any thing that shall be a means of communication between God and his people, as unto the grace of the covenant on the one hand, or the duties of obedience which it requires on the other; they have no power to erect any new church-state, or enact any thing in divine worship, not of his institution. This being the state of churches and their ordinances, they cannot be altered, they cannot be liable unto any decay, unless the covenant whereunto they are annexed, be altered or decayed. And therefore the apostle, to put finally and absolutely his argument unto an issue, to prove that the Mosaical church-state and ordinances were changed, because useless and ineffectual, doth it on this ground, that the covenant whereunto they were annexed, was changed and become useless. This I suppose at present will not be said concerning the new covenant, whereunto all ordinances of divine worship are inseparably annexed.

Men might at a cheaper rate, as unto the eternal interest of their own souls, provide another covering for their sloth, negligence, unbelief, and indulgence unto proud foolish imaginations, whereby they render the churches and ordinances of the gospel useless and ineffectual unto themselves; thereby charging them with a decay and uselessness, and so reflecting on the honour and faithfulness of Christ himself.

2. They do not cease, because there is at present, or at least there is shortly to be expected, 'such an effusion of the gifts and graces of the Spirit, as to render all these external institutions needless, and consequently useless.' This also is falsely pretended. For, (1.) The greatest and most plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit in his gifts and graces, was in the days of the apostles, and of the first churches planted by them; nor is any thing beyond it, or indeed equal unto it, any more to be expected in this world. But yet then was the gospel church-state erected, and the use of all its ordinances of worship enjoined. (2.) The ministry of the gospel which compriseth all the ordinances of church-worship, as its object and end, is the ministration of the Spirit, and therefore no supplies or communication of him can render it useless. (3.) One of the principal ends for which the

communication of the Spirit is promised unto the church, is to make and render all the institutions of Christ effectual unto its edification. (4.) 1 John ii. 20. 27. is usually pleaded as giving countenance unto this fond pretence. But, [1.] The unction mentioned by the apostle, was then upon all believers. Yet, [2.] It is known that then they all walked in church-order, and the sacred observation of all the institutions of Christ. [3.] If it takes away any thing, it is the preaching of the word, or all manner of teaching and instruction; which is to overthrow the whole Scripture, and to reduce religion into barbarism. [4.] Nothing is intended in these words, but the different way of teaching, and degrees of success, between that under the law, and that now established in the gospel, by the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, as hath been evidenced at large elsewhere. Nor,

3. Do they cease, in their administration, for want either of authority or ability to dispense them; which is pleaded unto the same end. But neither is this pretence of any force; it only begs the thing in question. (1) The authority of office for the administration of all other ordinances, is an institution. And to say that all institutions cease, because none have authority to administer them, is to say they must all cease, because they are ceased. (2.) The office of the ministry for the continuation of the church-state, and administration of all ordinances of worship unto the end of the world, is sufficiently secured, [1.] By the law, constitution, and appointment of our Lord Jesus Christ, erecting that office, and giving warranty for its continuance to the consummation of all things; Matt. xxviii. 20. Eph. iv. 13. [2.] By his continuance according unto his promise to communicate spiritual gifts unto men, for the ministerial edification of the church. That this he doth so continue to do, that it is the principal external evidence of his abiding in the discharge of his mediatory office, and of what nature these gifts are, I have declared at large in a peculiar discourse on that subject. [3.] On the duty of believers or of the church, which is to choose, call, and solemnly set apart unto the office of the ministry, such as the Lord Christ by his Spirit, hath made meet for it, according unto the rule of his word.

If all these, or any of them do fail, I acknowledge that

all ministerial authority and ability for the dispensation of gospel ordinances must fail also, and consequently the state of the church. And those who plead for the continuation of a successive ministry, without respect unto these things, without resolving both the authority and office of it unto them, do but erect a dead image, or embrace a dead carcase, instead of the living and life-giving institutions of Christ. They take away the living creature, and set up a skin stuffed with straw. But if these things do unalterably continue; if the law of Christ can neither be changed, abrogated, or disannulled; if his dispensation of spiritual gifts according unto his promise cannot be impeded; if believers through his grace will continue in obedience unto his commands, it is not possible there should be an utter failure in this office, and office-power of this ministry. It may fail in this or that place, in this or that church, when the Lord Christ will remove his candlestick. But it hath a living root whence it will spring again in other places and churches, whilst this world doth endure. Neither,

4. Do they cease, because they have been all of them corrupted, abused, and defiled in the apostacy which fell out among all the churches in the latter ages, as it was fully foretold in the Scripture. For, (1.) This supposition would make the whole kingdom of Christ in the world to depend on the corrupt lusts and wills of men, which have got by any means the outward possession of the administration of his laws and ordinances. This is all one as if we should say, that if a pack of wicked judges should for a season pervert justice, righteousness, and judgment, that the being of the kingdom is so overthrown thereby, as that it can never be restored. (2.) It would make all the duties and all the privileges of all true believers to depend on the wills of wicked apostates. For if they may not make use of what they have abused, they can never yield obedience to the commands of Christ, nor enjoy the privileges which he hath annexed unto his church and worship. (3.) On this supposition, all reformation of an apostatized church is utterly impossible. But it is our duty to heal even Babylon itself, by a reduction of all things unto their first institution, if it would be healed; Jer. li. 9. and if not, we are to forsake her, and reform ourselves. Rev. xviii. 4.

There is nothing, therefore, in all these pretences, that should in the least impeach the infallible continuation of the evangelical churches and worship, as to their right, unto the end of the world. And the heads of those arguments whereby the truth is invincibly confirmed, may be briefly touched on.

1. There are express testimonies of the will of Christ, and his promise for its accomplishment, that the church and all its ordinances of worship should be continued always unto the end of the world. So as to the church itself, Matt. xvi. 18. Rev. xxi. 3. the ministry, Matt. xxviii. 20. Eph. iv. 13. baptism, Matt. xxviii. 18—20. the Lord's supper, 1 Cor. xi. 26. As for other institutions, public prayer, preaching the word, the Lord's day, singing of God's praises, the exercise of discipline with what belongs thereunto, they have their foundation in the law and light of nature, being only directed and applied unto the gospel church-state and worship, by rules of especial institution; and they can no more cease than the original obligation of that law can so do.

If it be said, that notwithstanding what may be thus pleaded, yet 'de facto,' the true state of gospel churches, and their whole worship as unto its original institution did fail under the papal apostacy, and therefore may do so again: I answer, 1. We do not plead that this state of things must be always visible and conspicuous, wherein all Protestant writers do agree. It is acknowledged, that as unto public view, observation, and notoriety, all these things were lost under the papacy, and may be so again under a renewed apostacy. 2. I do not plead it to be necessary 'de facto,' that there should be really at all times, a true visible church, as the seat of all ordinances and administrations in the world; but all such churches may fail, not only as unto visibility, but as unto their existence. But this supposition of a failure of all instituted churches and worship, I grant only with these limitations: (1.) That it is of necessity from innumerable divine promises, and the nature of Christ's kingly office, that there be always in the world a number greater or lesser of sincere believers, that openly profess subjection and obedience unto him. (2.) That in these persons there resides an indefeasible right always

to gather themselves into a church-state, and to administer all gospel ordinances, which all the world cannot deprive them of; which is the whole of what I now plead for. And let it be observed, that all the ensuing arguments depend on this right, and not on any matter of fact. [3.] I do not know how far God may accept of churches in a very corrupt state, and of worship much depraved, until they have new means for their reformation. Nor will I make any judgment of persons as unto their eternal condition, who walk in churches so corrupted, and in the performance of worship so depraved. But as unto them who know them to be so corrupted and depraved, it is a damnable sin to join with them, or not to separate from them. Rev. xviii. 4.

2. The nature and use of the gospel church-state require and prove the uninterrupted continuance of the right of its existence, and the observance of all ordinances of divine worship therein, with a power in them, in whom that right doth indefeasibly reside, that is, all true believers, to bring it forth into exercise and practice, notwithstanding the external impediments which in some places at some times may interrupt its exercise. In the observation of Christ's institutions, and celebration of the ordinances of divine worship, doth the church-state of the gospel, as professing, consist. It doth so in opposition, (1.) Unto the world and the kingdom of Satan. For hereby do men call Jesus Lord, as 1 Cor. xii. 3. and avow their subjection unto his kingly power. (2.) Unto the church-state of the Old Testament, as the apostle disputes at large in his Epistle unto the Hebrews. And this state of the professing church in this world is unalterable, because it is the best state that the believing church is capable of. For so the apostle plainly proves, that hereby the believing church is brought εἰς τελείωσιν, which it was not under the law; that is, unto its consummation, in the most complete perfection that God hath designed unto it on this side glory. Heb. vii. 11. 19. For Christ in all his offices, is the immediate head of it: its constitution, and the revelation of the ways of its worship, are an effect of his wisdom; and from thence is it eminently suited unto all the ends of the covenant, both on the part of God and man, and is therefore liable to no intercision or alteration.

3. The visible administration of the kingdom of Christ in this world, consists in this church-state, with the administration of his institutions and laws therein. A kingdom the Lord Jesus Christ hath in this world; and though it be not of the world, yet in the world it must be, until the world shall be no more. The truth of all God's promises in the Scripture depends on this one assertion. We need not here concern ourselves what notions some men have about the exercise of this kingdom in the world, with respect unto the outward affairs and concerns of it; but this is certain, that this kingdom of Christ in the world, so far as it is external and visible, consists in the laws he hath given, the institutions he hath appointed, the rule of polity he hath prescribed, with the due observance of them. Now all these things do make, constitute, and are the church-state and worship inquired after. Wherefore, as Christ always hath and ever will have an invisible kingdom in this world, in the souls of elect believers, led, guided, ruled by his Spirit; so he will have a visible kingdom also, consisting in a professed avowed subjection unto the laws of his word. Rom. x. 10. And although this kingdom, or his kingdom in this sense, may, as unto the essence of it, be preserved in the external profession of individual persons, and it may be, so exist in the world for a season; yet the honour of it, and its complete establishment, consists in the visible profession of churches, which he will therefore maintain unto the end. But by visible in this discourse, I understand not that which is conspicuous and eminent unto all, though the church hath been so, and shall yet be so again; nor yet that which is actually seen or known by others; but only that which may be so, or is capable of being so known. Nor do I assert a necessity hereof, as unto a constant preservation of purity and regularity in order and ordinances, according to the original institution of them in any place; but only of an unalterable right and power in believers to render them visible; which it becomes their indispensable duty to do, when outward impediments are not absolutely insuperable. But of these things thus far, ὡς ἐν παρἀδω.

CHAP. X.

What sort of churches the disciples of Christ may, and ought, to join themselves unto as unto entire communion.

We have proved before that it is the duty of all individual Christians to give themselves up unto the conduct, fellowship, and communion of some particular church or congregation. Our present inquiry hereon is, that whereas there is a great diversity among professing societies in the world, concerning each whereof it is said, 'Lo here is Christ, and lo there is Christ,' what church, of what constitution and order, any one that takes care of his own edification and salvation, ought to join himself unto. This I shall speak unto first in general, and then in the examination of one particular case or instance, wherein many at this day are concerned. And some things must be premised unto the right stating of the subject of our inquiry.

1. The diversities and divisions among churches which respect is to be had unto, in the choice of any which we will or ought to join unto, are of two sorts.

(1.) Such as are occasioned by the remaining weaknesses, infirmities, and ignorance of the best of men, whereby they know but in part, and prophesy only in part, wherein our edification is concerned, but our salvation not endangered.

(2.) Such as are in and about things fundamental in faith, worship, and obedience. We shall speak to both of them.

2. All Christians were originally of one mind in all things needful unto joint communion, so as that there might be among them all, love without dissimulation. Howbeit there was great variety not only in the measure of their apprehensions of the doctrines of truth, but in some doctrines themselves, as about the continuance of the observations of the law, or at least of some of them; as also oppositions from without unto the truth, by heretics and apostates; neither of which hindered the church communion of true believers. But the diversity, difference, and divisions that are now among

churches in the world, is the effect of the great apostacy which befell them all in the latter ages, as unto the spirit, rule, and practice of those which were planted by the apostles, and will not be healed, until that apostacy be abolished.

3. Satan having possessed himself of the advantage of these divisions, whereof he was the author, he makes use of them to act his malice and rage, in stirring up and instigating one party to persecute, oppress, and devour another, until the life, power, and glory of Christian religion is almost lost in the world. It requires therefore great wisdom to deport ourselves aright among these divisions, so as to contribute nothing unto the ends of malice designed by Satan in them.

4. In this state of things until it may be cured, which it will never be, by any of the ways yet proposed and insisted on; the inquiry is concerning the duty of any one who takes care of his own soul, as unto a conjunction with some church or other. And on the negative part, I say,

1. Such a one is bound not to join with any church or society where any fundamental article of faith is rejected or corrupted. There may be a fundamental error in a true church for a season, when the church erreth not fundamentally. 1 Cor. xv. 2 Tim. ii. 18. But I suppose the error in or against the foundation, is part of the profession of the church or society to be joined unto. For thereby the nature of the church is destroyed; it doth not hold the head, nor abide on the foundation, nor is the ground and pillar of truth. Wherefore, although the Socinians under a pretence of love, forbearance, and mutual toleration, do offer us the communion of their churches, wherein there is somewhat of order and discipline commendable; yet it is unlawful to join in church fellowship or communion with them. For their errors about the Trinity, the incarnation of Christ, and his satisfaction, are destructive of the foundation of the prophets and apostles; and idolatry, in the divine worship of a mere creature, is introduced by them.

2. Where there is in any church taught or allowed, a mixture of doctrines or opinions that are prejudicial unto gospel holiness and obedience, no man that takes due care of his salvation can join himself unto it. For the original rule and measure of all church communion, is agreement in the doc-

trine of truth. Where, therefore, there is either not a stable profession of the same doctrine in all substantial truths of the gospel, but an uncertain sound is given, some saying one thing, some another; or that opposition is made unto any truths, of the importance before mentioned; none can be bound or obliged to hold communion with it; nor can incur any blame by refraining from it. For it is the duty of a Christian in all things, προτιμᾶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν; and to join with such a church, would, (1.) Stain their profession; (2.) Hinder their edification; (3.) Establish a new rule of communion unknown to the Scriptures; namely, besides truth; as might easily be manifested.

3. Where the fundamentals of religious worship are corrupted or overthrown, it is absolutely unlawful to join unto, or abide in any church. So is it with the church of Rome. The various ways whereby the foundations of divine religious worship are overthrown in that church by superstition and idolatry have been sufficiently declared. These render the communion of that church pernicious.

4. Nor can any man be obliged to join himself with any church, nor can it be his duty so to do, where the eternally fixed rule and measure of religious worship, namely, that it be of divine institution, is varied or changed by any additions unto it, or subtractions from it. For whereas one principal end of all churches is the joint celebration of divine worship, if there be not a certain stable rule thereof in any church of divine prescription, no man can be obliged unto communion therewith.

5. Where the fundamentals of church-order, practice, and discipline are destroyed, it is not lawful for any man to join in church communion. These fundamentals are of two sorts; (1.) Such as concern the ministry of the church; (2.) Such as concern the church itself.

There are four things that are necessary fundamentals unto the order of the church, on the part of the ministry.

(1.) That all the ministers or officers of it, be duly chosen by the church itself, and solemnly set apart in the church unto their office, according unto the rule and law of Christ. This is fundamental unto church-order, the root of it, from whence all other parts of it do spring. And it is that which is ῥητῶς or expressly provided for in the Scrip-

ture, as we shall see. If there be a neglect herein, and no other relation required between ministers, elders, rulers, bishops, and the church, but what is raised and created by ways and rules of men's appointment; or if there be a temporary disposal of persons into a discharge of that office, without a solemn call, choice, ordination, and separation unto the office itself and its work, the law of Christ is violated, and the order of the church disturbed in its foundation.

(2.) That those who are called unto the office of the ministry be duly qualified, by their endowment with spiritual gifts for the discharge of their duty, is fundamental unto the ministry; that the Lord Jesus Christ doth still continue his dispensation of spiritual gifts unto men, to fit and enable them unto the office and work of the ministry; that if he doth not do so, or should at any time cease so to do, the whole office of the ministry must cease, and the being of the church with it; that it is altogether useless for any churches or persons to erect an image of the gospelministry by outward rites and ceremonies, without the enlivening form of these spiritual gifts, I have proved sufficiently in my discourse of Spiritual Gifts, and their continuance in the church. Wherefore, a communication of spiritual gifts peculiarly enabling men unto the work of the ministry, antecedent unto their solemn separation unto the office, in some good measure, is absolutely necessary unto the due continuance of the office and its work. See Eph. iv. 7. 11—15. To suppose that the Lord Christ doth call and appoint men, unto a certain office and work in his church, secluding all others from any interest in the one or other, and yet not endow them with peculiar gifts and abilities for the discharge of that office and work, is to ascribe that unto him, which is every way unbecoming his wisdom and grace, with his love unto the church. But when men look on all church-order, as a lifeless machine to be acted, moved, and disposed by external rules, laws, canons and orders, without respect unto the actings of the Spirit of Christ going before in the rule of his word, to enliven every part of it, the true disciples of Christ will receive no advantage thereby.

(3.) It is of the same importance that persons so called, do take heed unto their ministry that they fulfil it, that

they give themselves unto the word and prayer, that they labour continually in the word and doctrine, and all those other duties which in the Scripture are prescribed unto them; and this not only as unto the matter of them, but as unto the manner of their performance with zeal, love, compassion, and diligence. Where there is a great defect in any of these things, on what pretence soever it be: where men esteem themselves exempted from this work, or not obliged unto it; when they suppose that they may discharge their office at a cheaper rate, and with less trouble, as unto their present interest, by such ways as I shall not here express, no man is, no man can be, obliged to confine his church communion unto such a ministry.

(4.) It is required that they be examples unto the flock, in the expression of the nature and power of the doctrine which they preach, in their conversation, especially in zeal, humility, self-denial, and readiness for the cross.

Where these things are not, there is such a defect in the fundamentals of church practice, as unto the ministry of it, that no man who takes care of his own edification can join himself unto a church labouring under it. For ministers and churches are nothing but instituted means of the conversion of sinners, and the edification of believers. And when any of them through their own default cease so to be, there is no obligation unto any man to join or continue in their communion; nor do they contract any guilt in a peaceable departure from them, but discharge their duty. That this be done peaceably without strife or contention, without judging of others, as unto their interest in Christ, and eternal salvation, the law of moral obedience doth require. That it be done with love and compassion and prayer towards and for them who are left, is the peculiar direction of that moral duty by the gospel. Such a practice at present would fall under severe charges and accusations, as also brutish penalties in some places. But when all church craft shall be defeated, and the uses that are made of its imaginary authority be discarded, there will be little occasion of this practice, and none at all of offence.

Again, There are things fundamental unto church practice and order in the church itself, which where they are neglected, no man ought of choice to join himself unto that

church, seeing he cannot do it without the prejudice of his edification, the furtherance whereof he ought to design in that duty. And these are,

1. That the discipline of Christ be duly exercised in it according unto his mind, and by the rules of his prescription. There never was any sect, order, or society of men in the world, designed for the preservation and promotion of virtue and things praiseworthy, but they had rules of discipline proper unto the ends of their design, to be observed in and by all that belong unto them. Where the erection of such societies is continued in the world, as it is much in the papacy, both their constitution and their conversation, depend on the especial rules of discipline which they have framed unto themselves. And this is done by them in great variety; for being ignorant of the discipline of the gospel, and so esteeming it insufficient unto their design, they have made no end of coining rules unto themselves. To suppose that our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his church-state, according to his infinite wisdom, hath erected the most perfect society for the most perfect ends of religion, of obedience towards God, of love and usefulness among ourselves, hath not appointed a discipline, and given rules concerning its administration for the preservation of that society, and the attaining of those ends, is highly injurious unto his honour and glory.

Where, therefore, there is a church or any society that pretends so to be, wherein there is an utter neglect of this discipline of Christ, or the establishment of another, not administered by the laws and rules that he hath prescribed, no disciple of Christ can be obliged to join unto, or to continue in the total sole communion of such a church. And whereas there are two parts of this discipline of Christ; that which is private, among the members of the church, for the exercise and preservation of love; and that which is public, in and by the authority of the rulers of the church, for the preservation of purity and order, a neglect in either of them, doth much impeach the fundamental constitution of a church as unto its practice.

2. There are sundry other things which belong unto this discipline in general, which are of great consideration in

the discharge of the duty we inquire into. Among them are,

(1.) That constant difference be put between the good and the bad in all church administrations.

(2.) That persons openly or flagitiously wicked, be not admitted into the society of the church, or a participation of its privileges.

(3.) That holiness, love, and usefulness, be openly avowed as the design and interest of the church. But they are all so compr isen the general head of discipline, as that I shall not in particular insist upon them.

From what hath been thus declared, it will appear on the other hand, what church it is that a disciple of Christ, who takes due care of his own edification and salvation, ought in duty to join himself unto in complete communion. To answer this inquiry is the end of all those discourses and controversies which have been about the notes of the true church. I shall briefly determine concerning it, according to the principles before evinced.

1. It must be such a church as wherein all the fundamental truths of the gospel are believed, owned, and professed, without controversy, and those not borne withal by whom they are denied or opposed. Without this a church is not the ground and pillar of truth, it doth not hold the head, it is not built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles. Neither is it sufficient, that those things are generally professed or not denied. A church that is filled with wranglings and contentions about fundamental or important truths of the gospel, is not of choice to be joined unto. For these things subvert the souls of men, and greatly impede their edification. And although both among distinct churches, and among the members of the same church, mutual forbearance be to be exercised, with respect unto a variety in apprehensions in some doctrines of lesser moment; yet the incursion that hath been made into sundry Protestant churches in the last and present age, of novel doctrines and opinions, with differences, divisions, and endless disputes which have ensued thereon, have rendered it very difficult to determine how to engage in complete communion with them. For I do not judge, that any man is, or

can be obliged unto constant total communion with any church, or to give up himself absolutely unto the conduct thereof, wherein there are incurable dissensions about important doctrines of the gospel. And if any church shall publicly avow, countenance, or approve of doctrines contrary unto those which were the foundation of its first communion, the members of it are at liberty to refrain the communion of it, and to provide otherwise for their own edification.

2. It must be such a church as wherein the divine worship instituted or approved by Christ himself is diligently observed, without any addition made thereunto. In the observance of this worship as unto all external, occasional incidences and circumstances of the acts wherein it doth consist, it is left unto the prudence of the church itself, according to the light of nature, and general rules of Scripture; and it must be so unless we shall suppose that the Lord Jesus Christ, by making men his disciples, doth unmake them from being rational creatures, or refuseth the exercise of the rational faculties of our souls in his service. But this is so remote from truth, that on the contrary, he gives them an improvement for this very end, that we may know how to deport ourselves aright in the observance of his commands, as unto the outward discharge of them in his worship and the circumstances of it. And this he doth by that gift of spiritual wisdom, whereof we shall treat afterward.

But if men, if churches, will make additions in or unto the rites of religious worship, unto what is appointed by Christ himself, and require their observance in their communion, on the force and efficacy of their being so by them appointed, no disciple of Christ is or can be obliged, by virtue of any divine institution or command, to join in total absolute communion, with any such church. He may be induced on various considerations to judge, that something of that nature at some season, may not be evil and sinful unto him, which therefore he will bear with, or comply withal; yet he is not, he cannot be obliged by virtue of any divine rule or command, to join himself with, or continue in, the communion of such a church. If any shall suppose that hereby too much liberty is granted unto believers in the choice of their com-

munion, and shall thereon make severe declamations, about the inconveniencies and evils which will ensue; I desire they would remember the principle I proceed upon, which is, that churches are not such sacred machines as some suppose, erected and acted for the outward interest and advantages of any sort of men; but only means of the edification of believers, which they are bound to make use of, in obedience unto the commands of Christ, and no otherwise. Whereas, therefore, the disciples of Christ have not only a divine warranty justifying them in the doing of it, but an express command making it their indispensable duty to join in the celebration of all that religious worship, which the Lord Christ, the only lawgiver of the church, and who was faithful both in and over the house of God, as the Son, hath instituted and commanded; but have no such warranty or command for any thing else, it is their duty to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free. And if by the same breath, in the same rule, law, or canon, they are commanded and obliged to observe in the worship of God, what the Lord Christ hath appointed, and what he hath not appointed, both on the same grounds, namely, the authority of the church, and on the same penalties for their omission, no man can be divinely obliged to embrace the communion of any church on such terms.

3. It is required that the ministry of a church so to be joined with, is not defective in any of those things which, according to the rule of the gospel, are fundamental thereunto. What these are hath been declared. And because edification, which is the end of church communion, doth so eminently depend on the ministry of the church, there is not any thing which we ought to have a more diligent consideration of, in the joining of ourselves unto any such communion. And where the ministry of any church, be the church of what sort or size it will, is incurably ignorant or negligent, or through a defect in gifts, grace, or conscientious attendance unto their duty, is insufficient unto the due edification of the souls of them that believe, no man can account himself obliged unto the communion of the church, but he that can be satisfied with a shadow and the names of things, for the substance and reality of them.

If therefore it be granted, as I think it is, that edifica-

tion is the principal end of all church communion, it is not intelligible how a man should be obliged unto that communion, and that alone, wherein due edification cannot be obtained. Wherefore, a ministry enabled by spiritual gifts, and engaged by sense of duty to labour constantly in the use of all means appointed by Christ for the edification of the church, or increase of his mystical body, is required in such a church, as a believer may conscientiously join himself unto. And where it is otherwise, let men cry out schism and faction whilst they please, Jesus Christ will acquit his disciples in the exercise of their liberty, and accept them in the discharge of their duty.

If it be said, that if all men be thus allowed to judge of what is best for their own edification, and to act according unto the judgment which they make, they will be continually parting from one church unto another, until all things are filled with disturbance and confusion; I say,

(1.) That the contrary assertion, namely, that men are not allowed to judge what is meet and best for their own edification, or not to act according to the judgment they make herein, may possibly keep up some churches, but is the ready way to destroy all religion.

(2.) That many of those by whom this liberty is denied unto professing Christians, yet do indeed take it for granted, that they have such a liberty, and that it is their duty to make use of it. For what are all the contests between the church of Rome and the church of England, so far as Christians, that are not churchmen, are concerned in them? Is it not, in whether of these churches edification may be best obtained? If this be not the ball between us, I know not what is. Now herein do not all the writers and preachers of both parties give their reasons and arguments unto the people, why edification is better to be had in the one church than in the other? and do they not require of them to form a judgment upon those reasons and arguments, and to act accordingly? If they do not, they do but make a flourish, and act a part, like players on a stage, without any determinate design.

(3.) All Christians actually do so; they do judge for themselves, unless they are brutish; they do act according unto that judgment, unless they are hardened in sin; and

therefore who do not so, are not to be esteemed disciples of Christ. To suppose that in all things of spiritual and eternal concernment, that men are not determined and acted, every one by his own judgment, is an imagination of men who think but little of what they are, or do, or say, or write. Even those who shut their eyes against the light, and follow in the herd, resolving not to inquire into any of these things, do it, because they judge it is best for them so to do.

(4.) It is commonly acknowledged by Protestants, that private Christians have a judgment of discretion in things of religion. The term was invented to grant them some liberty of judgment in opposition unto the blind obedience required by the church of Rome; but withal to put a restraint upon it, and a distinction of some superior judgment, it may be in the church or others. But if by discretion, they mean the best of men's understanding, knowledge, wisdom, and prudence, in and about the things wherein it is exercised, I should be glad to be informed, what other judgment, than this of discretion in and about the things of religion, this or that or any church in the world, can have or exercise. But to allow men a judgment of discretion, and not to grant it their duty to act according unto that judgment, is to oblige them to be fools, and to act, not discreetly, at least not according unto their own discretion.

4. The same is to be spoken of gospel discipline, without which neither can the duties of church societies be observed, nor the ends of them attained. The neglect, the loss, the abuse hereof, is that which hath ruined the glory of Christian religion in the world, and brought the whole profession of it into confusion. Hereon have the fervency and sincerity of true evangelical mutual love been abated, yea, utterly lost. For that love which Jesus Christ requireth among his disciples, is such as never was in the world before amongst men, nor can be in the world, but on the principles of the gospel, and faith therein. Therefore it is called his new commandment. The continuation of it amongst the generality of Christians is but vainly pretended; little or nothing of the reality of it in its due exercise is found. And this hath ensued on the neglect of evan-

gelical discipline in churches, or the turning of it into a worldly domination. For one principal end of it, is the preservation, guidance, and acting of this love. That mutual watch over one another that ought to be in all the members of the church, the principal evidence and fruit of love without dissimulation, is also lost hereby. Most men are rather ready to say in the spirit and words of Cain, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' than to attend unto the command of the apostles, 'Exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin;' or comply with the command of our Saviour, 'If thy brother offend thee, tell him of it between him and thee.' By this means likewise is the purity of communion lost, and those received as principal members of churches, who, by all the rules of primitive discipline, ought to be cast out of them. Wherefore, this also is to be considered in the choice we are to make of what churches we will join ourselves unto, as unto constant complete communion, and in whose communion we will abide. For these things are matters of choice, and consist in voluntary free acts of obedience. With those unto whom they are not so, who would on the one hand have them to be things that men may be compelled unto, and ought so to be; or on the other that follow no other guidance in them but outward circumstances from the times and places where they are born and inhabit, I will have no contest. It follows from hence also, that,

Where there are many churches wherein these things are found, whereon we may lawfully and ought in duty to join with some of them, in particular, every one is obliged to join himself unto such a church, as whose principles and practices are most suited unto his edification.

CHAP. XI.

Of conformity and communion in parochial assemblies.

From what we have insisted on, we may borrow some light into the determination of that case, wherein multitudes are at this day concerned. And the case itself may be briefly stated in this inquiry; namely, whether all Protestants,

ministers and people, are bound to join themselves unto the church of England, as now by law established in its parochial assemblies, as unto complete constant communion, without the use of any other church means for their own edification; so as if they do not so do, they are guilty of schism. This is that which is called conformity unto the church of England, which as unto private persons, can be expressed only in constant complete communion in parochial assemblies, according to their present constitution, without the use or exercise of any other church worship or discipline, but what is by law established in them. Refraining from an absolute compliance herein, is called schism. But whereas ecclesiastical schism, whatever it be in particular, in its general nature hath respect only unto divine institutions; this which respecteth only the laws, rules, and determinations of men, can have no alliance thereunto. Yet is it not only charged as such, without the least countenance from Scripture or antiquity so far as it may be allowed of authority with us, but the supposition of it, is accumulated with another evil, namely, that those who are so guilty (of it) in the judgment of them who are interested with secular power, though peaceable and orthodox, ought to be punished with various penalties, gradually coming unto the loss of goods, liberty, and in some cases of life itself. An opinion ignominious unto Christian religion, however vapoured withal by young men, whose wit flies above all serious consideration of things and their circumstances; and countenanced by others, from an influence of interest, who otherwise would not be imposed on, by such an anti-evangelical presumption. I shall, therefore, at the utmost distance from interest or passion, briefly consider the case proposed, and give an account of my thoughts concerning it.

1. One or two things are usually premised unto the consideration of this case; as namely,

(1.) That those who refrain from that communion with the church of England which we insist upon, do yet agree therewith in all important doctrines of faith, which is the foundation, the life and soul of church-union and communion. This I freely grant, but with this limitation; that this agreement respects the doctrine as declared at the first reformation, and explained in the age next ensuing thereon.

If there be a change made in or of these doctrines, or any of them, by any in or of the church of England, we profess our disagreement from them; and do declare that thereby the foundation of our communion with them is weakened, and the principal bond of it loosened.

(2.) That not only as Christians, but as reformed Protestants, we do agree in the renunciation of the doctrines and worship of the church of Rome, which are opposed by the common consent of all those who are usually so called. Yet this must be added thereunto; that if any in or of the church of England, should make an accession unto any parts of the doctrine and worship of the Roman church, not avowed or warranted by the consent of the church in its first reformation, we are not, we cannot be obliged unto communion with them therein; and by their so doing, the original bond of our communion is weakened, if not dissolved.

2. These things being premised, we shall inquire in the first place, what is the rule of that communion with the church of England in its parochial assemblies, which is required of us. If this be pleaded to be a rule of divine prescription, we acknowledge that great diligence and humility are required unto the consideration of it, that we be not mistaken. And if it prove to be according to the mind of Christ, that is, of his institution, if we fail of a compliance with it, we are guilty of schism. But if the rule prescribing, limiting, and exacting this communion, be not so much as pleaded to be of divine institution, whatever fault there may be in our dissent from it, schism it is not; for ecclesiastical schism neither hath nor can have respect unto any thing but divine institutions. For if it hath, it is in the power of any sort of men, to make schismatics of whom they please, as, practically and in pretence, it is come to pass at this day in the world. Now the rule of the communion required, is the law of the land, the book of canons, with the rubric of the common prayer. If according to the prescriptions, directions, and commands, given in them, we do join ourselves in communion with parochial assemblies, then are we judged conformable to the church of England, and not else. By and according unto these, are all inquiries made concerning communion with the church; and if they

are observed, the return is, 'omnia bene.' Now this rule hath no divine warrant for its institution, no example in the primitive churches, especially considering what are the things which it obliges us unto; nor can be made consistent with the liberty wherewith Christ hath made his disciples free. A dissent from this rule, is as far from schism as any man need desire it; for nothing is so, but what respects some command or institution of Christ, which immediately affects the conscience. It is true, the Lord Christ hath commanded that love, union, peace, and order, whereof schism is a disturbance, and whereunto it is opposite; but they are that love, union, and order which he hath appointed. To suppose that he hath left it unto men, to invent and appoint a new kind of union and order, which is done in the rule we treat of, which he never required, and then to oblige his disciples unto the observation of it, be it what it will, so as that their dissent from it should be criminal, and that for this reason, that it is so appointed of men, is no small mistake. And if all that love, union, peace, and order, which the Lord Jesus hath enjoined his disciples, may be punctually observed, without any respect unto this rule, as a rule of church communion, to dissent from it, whatever fault of another kind it may be, is no more schism than it is adultery. And if on some men's arbitrary constitution of this rule, and the dissent of others from it, such differences and divisions ensue, as seem to have the general nature of schism, the evil of them belongs unto those alone, by whom the rule is framed. If indeed some should frame such a rule of church communion, because they suppose they see cause for it, and would then leave it unto others to observe, as they see cause, if it be not of use, it would not be liable unto much abuse. But whereas our Lord Jesus Christ hath given one and the same rule equally unto all his disciples in these things, namely, that they should observe and do all that he hath commanded them; for some of them on any pretence or plea whatever, as of their being the church, or the like, arbitrarily to frame a rule of their own, as an addition unto his, obliging all others unto a strict observance of it, because they have so framed it, is that which neither the Scripture nor primitive antiquity know any thing of.

I will not inquire what is that power and authority whereby this rule is constituted and confirmed, nor in whom it doth reside. The name of the church is usually pretended and pleaded. But before any can be concerned herein, all that hath been pleaded for the true state and nature of evangelical churches must be overthrown, which will not be done speedily. Railings, revilings, and reproaches will not do it. But until this is done, it will be believed, that every particular congregation, is indispensably obliged in itself to observe and do all the commands of Christ; and is left at liberty so to regulate the outward circumstances of its worship and order, as is best for its own edification, whereof itself is the most competent judge. But as for a church of another sort, invested with authority to make a rule, not only as unto the outward circumstances of those actions wherein church-order and worship do consist, but as unto sundry religious rites and observances which thereby are added unto it, and impose the observance of it, on a great multitude of other congregations, without their consent, whether they judge the things enjoined to be for their edification or otherwise, it is apparently not from heaven, but of men. Wherefore, leave Christians and churches at that liberty which Christ hath purchased for them, wherewith he hath made them free, and then let those who first break union and order, bear the charge of schism, which they cannot avoid.

3. The church communion required by virtue of this rule is constant and complete, exclusive unto any other church-order, or means of public edification. It doth not command or appoint that men should communicate in parochial assemblies, when there is occasion, when it is for their edification, when scandal would arise if they should refuse it; but absolutely and completely. And whereas there are many things relating unto church-order and divine worship enjoined in that rule, there is no distinction made between them, that some things are always necessary, that is in the seasons of them, and some things wherein men may forbear a compliance, but they are all equally required in their places and seasons; though perhaps on different penalties. And whoever fails in the observation of any ceremony, time or place, appointed therein, is in the power of them who are

intrusted with the administration of church-power or jurisdiction; for the discipline of the church it cannot be called. Suppose a man would comply with all other things, only he esteems the use of one rite or ceremony, as the cross in baptism, or the like, to be unlawful; if he forbear the use of it, or to tender his child unto baptism where it is used, he is to be cut off as a schismatic from the communion of the church, no less than if he had absolutely refused a compliance with the whole rule. And therefore, whatever condescension and forbearance in some things is pretended, he that doth not in all things observe the whole rule, is in 'misericordia concellarii;' which oft proves an uneasy posture. If any men think that the Lord Christ hath given them such a power and authority over the souls and consciences of his disciples, as that they can bind them unto the religious observance of every rite and ceremony that they are pleased to appoint, on the penalty of excision from all church communion, and the guilt of schism, I shall only say, that I am not of their mind, nor ever shall be so.

4. This communion contains a virtual approbation of all that is contained in the rule of it, as good for the edification of the church. It is certain that nothing is to be appointed in the church but what is so; even order itself, which these things it is said are framed for, is good only with respect thereunto. Now it is to be judged, that whatever a man practiseth in religion, that he approveth of; for if he do not, he is a vile hypocrite. Nor is he worthy the name of a Christian, who will practise any thing in religion, but what he approveth. The disputes that have been amongst us about doing things with a doubting conscience, upon the command of superiors, and consenting unto the use of things which we approve not of in themselves, tend all to atheism, and the eternal dishonour of Christian religion, begetting a frame of mind which an honest heathen would scorn. Wherefore, unless men be allowed to declare what it is they approve, and what they do not, their practice is their profession of what they approve, which is the whole rule of communion prescribed unto them.

5. These things being premised, I shall propose some of those reasons, on the account whereof many cannot conform unto the church of England, by joining in constant complete

communion with parochial assemblies, so as by their practice to approve the rule of that communion, obliging themselves to use no other public means for their own edification.

1. The church of England in its parochial assemblies stands in need of reformation. For it is apparent, that either they fail in their original institution, or else have degenerated from it. What hath already been discoursed, concerning the original institution of churches, with men's voluntary coalescency into such sacred societies, with what shall be afterward treated, concerning their essential parts in matter and form, will sufficiently evidence their present deviation from the rule of their first institution. Neither, so far as I know, is it pleaded, that they are distinct churches of divine institution; but secular appointments, as for other ends, so for an accommodation of men in the performance of some parts of divine worship. And if they are found no more, they can have no concernment into the inquiry about schism. For withholding church communion from such societies as are not churches, is a new kind of schism, unknown to all antiquity. And for that which takes itself to be a church by a divine warranty, suppose it be so, to command constant complete communion, exclusive unto all other church communion, with that or them which are no churches, determining a refusal thereof to be schism, is to undertake a cause which needs not only great parts, but great power also to defend it.

But let these parochial assemblies be esteemed churches, without a supposition whereof, I know not what ecclesiastical concernment we can have in them; three things will be said thereon.

1. That the church of England (as in other things) so in these parochial assemblies, stands in need of reformation.

2. That they neither do, nor will, nor can reform themselves.

3. On this supposition, it is lawful for any of the disciples of Christ, to yield obedience unto him by joining in such societies for their edification as he hath appointed; which is the whole of the cause in hand. Nor doth any necessity from hence ensue of a departure from communion with the church of England in faith and love, or the profes-

sion of the same faith, and the due exercise of all the acts and duties of Christian love.

Unto the proof of the first assertion, some things are to be premised. As,

1. Churches instituted, planted, ruled according to the mind of Christ in all things, may degenerate into a corrupt state, such as shall stand in need of reformation, in a neglect whereof they must perish as unto their church-state and privileges. This needs no confirmation; for besides that it is possible from all the causes of such an apostacy and defection, that so it should be, and it is frequently foretold in the Scripture that so it would be, the event in and among all churches that had originally a divine institution, doth make uncontrollably evident. The seven churches of Asia, most of them within few years of their first plantation, were so degenerated, that our Lord Jesus Christ threatened them with casting off, unless they reformed themselves. What a woful apostacy all other churches, both of the east and west were involved in, is known unto and confessed by all Protestants. But yet the case of none of them was deplorable or desperate, until through pride and carnal interest they fell some of them into a persuasion that they needed no reformation, nor could be reformed, which is become a principal article of faith in the Roman church. There was a reformation attempted, and attained in some measure, by some nations or churches in the last ages, from the corruption and impositions of the church of Rome. However, none of them ever pretended that it was complete or perfect, according to the pattern of the Scripture, as unto the institution and discipline of the churches; no nor yet to the example of the primitive church of after ages, as is acknowledged by the church of England, in the beginning of the commination against sinners. But suppose it to be complete, to conclude that because an outward rule of it was established, so long as that outward rule is observed there can be no need of reformation, is a way to lead churches into a presumptuous security unto their ruin. For whereas men being secured in their interests by that rule, are prejudiced against any progress in reformation beyond what they have attained, which that it should be a duty is contrary

unto the whole nature of Christian religion, which is the conduct of a spiritual life, in the growth and increase of light and a suitable obedience; so they are apt to think that whilst they adhere unto that rule, they can stand in no need of reformation, which is but a new name for trouble and sedition; though it be the foundation on which they stand. But generally churches think that others stand in need of reformation, but they need none themselves. If they would but give them leave to reform themselves, who judge that it is needful for them, without the least prejudice unto their church profession, or secular interest, it is all that is desired of them.

2. Where churches do so stand in need of reformation, and will not reform themselves, being warned of their duty, the Lord Christ threatens to leave them, and assuredly will do so, in the time that he hath limited unto his patience. This is the subject of five of his epistles or messages unto the churches of Asia; Rev. ii. 3. And where the Lord Christ doth on any cause or provocation, withdraw his presence, in any kind or degree, from any church; it is the duty of any of the members of that church, to remove from themselves the guilt of that provocation, though it cannot be done without a separation from that church. It is safer leaving of any church whatever, than of Jesus Christ. I suppose most men think, that if they had a warning from Christ charging their defection, and calling for reformation, as those churches of Asia had, they would repent and reform themselves. But whereas it doth not appear that some of them did so, whereon they were not long after deserted and destroyed; it is like that there are others who would follow their steps, though one should rise from the dead to warn them of their danger. But this instruction that churches who lose their first faith, love, and works, who are negligent in discipline, and tolerate offensive evils in doctrines and manners among them, who are lukewarm as unto zeal, and dead for the greatest part of their members, as unto the life of holiness, are disapproved by Christ, and in danger of being utterly deserted by him, is given unto all churches, no less divinely, than if they had an immediate message from heaven about these things. Those therefore who being under the guilt of them, and do not reform themselves, cannot

claim the necessity of a continuance in their communion, from any disciples of Christ, as we shall see afterward.

3. Reformation respects either doctrine and worship, or obedience becoming the gospel. The debates about such a reformation as concerns the retaining or removing of certain ceremonies, we concern not ourselves in at present. Nor shall we in this place insist on what concerns doctrine and worship, which may afterward be spoken unto. But we shall confine ourselves here, unto the consideration of gospel obedience only. And we say,

That the church of England, in the generality of its parochial assemblies, and in itself, stands in need of reformation, by reason of the woful degeneracy of the generality of its members, that is, the inhabitants of the land, from the rule of the gospel and commands of Christ, as unto spiritual light, faith, love, holiness, charity, and abounding in the fruits of righteousness unto the praise of God, by Jesus Christ. These things are the immediate ends of church societies, the principal means whereby God is glorified in the world. Where they are neglected, where they are not attained, where they are not duly improved by the generality of the members of any church, that church, I think, stands in need of reformation.

This assertion may seem somewhat importune and severe. But when the sins of a church or nation are come to that height in all ranks, sorts, and degrees of men, that all persons of sobriety do fear daily that desolating judgments from God will break in upon us, it cannot be unseasonable to make mention of them, when it is done with no other design but only to shew the necessity of reformation, or how necessary it is for some, if all will not comply therewith. For if a city be on fire, it is surely lawful for any of the citizens, to save and preserve, if they can, their own houses, though the mayor and aldermen should neglect the preservation of the whole city in general.

It might be easily demonstrated what great numbers amongst us,

(1.) Who have imbided atheistical opinions, and either vent them, or speak presumptuously according unto their influence and tendency every day.

(2.) Who are profane scoffers at all true Christian piety

and the due expressions of the power of godliness, an evil not confined unto the laity; such things being uttered and published by them, as should be astonishable unto all that know the fear of the Lord and his terror.

(3.) Who are profoundly ignorant of the mysteries of the gospel, or those doctrines of Christian religion whose knowledge is of the highest importance and necessity.

(4.) Who are openly flagitious in their lives, whence all sorts of gross immoralities do fill the land from one end unto the other.

(5.) Who live in a constant neglect of all more private holy duties, whether in their families, or in personal retirements.

(6.) Who are evidently under the power of pride, vanity, covetousness, profaneness of speech in cursed oaths and swearing.

(7.) Who instruct the worst of men unto an approbation of themselves in such ways as these, by petulant scoffing at the very name of the Spirit and grace of Christ, at all expectation of his spiritual aids and assistances, at all fervency in religious duties, or other acts of a holy converse. These, and such like things as these, do sufficiently evidence the necessity of reformation. For where they are continued, the use and end of church societies is impaired or lost. And it is in vain to pretend that this is the old plea of them who caused schisms in the church, namely, that bad men were mixed with the good, for which cause they rejected those churches wherein that was allowed, as no true churches of Christ. For no such thing is included in what we assert, nor doth follow thereon. We do own that wicked hypocrites may be joined in true churches, and be made partakers of all the privileges of them. Neither is this a cause of withdrawing communion from any church, much less of condemning it as no true church of Christ. But this we say, that if such hypocrites discover themselves, in open scandalous sins, which upon examination will prove to be of a larger extent than some suppose, with respect unto sins of omission as well as of commission; if they are not dealt withal according as the discipline of Christ doth require in such cases, the church wherein they are allowed, especially if the number of such persons be many, or the most, the

generality of the people, and their sins notorious, doth stand in need of reformation; as the church of England doth acknowledge in the commination against sinners.

The substance of what is proposed under this consideration, may be expressed in the ensuing observations.

(1.) The generality of the inhabitants of this nation, are joined and do belong unto the church of England, in its parochial assemblies.

(2.) That many walk and live, without any visible compliance unto the rule of Christ in gospel obedience; yea,

(3.) Great, notorious, provoking sins do abound among them, for which it ought to be feared continually that the judgments of God will speedily follow, as is acknowledged in the commination.

(4.) That hereon they all stand in need of reformation, without which the principal ends of church communion cannot be obtained among them.

(5.) That this reformation is the duty of these churches themselves, which if it be neglected, they live in a contempt of the commands of Christ. For,

(6.) Unto them, in the preaching of the word, and exercise of discipline, are the means of this reformation committed; for we treat not at present of the power or duty of the supreme magistrate in these things.

(7.) That this state of churches cannot hinder, nor ought so to do, if continued in, the true disciples of Christ from reforming themselves, by endeavouring the due observance of all his commands.

2. In this state the church of England doth not, and it is to be feared will not, nor can reform itself. But although the weight of the whole argument in hand depends very much on this assertion, yet I shall not insist on its particular confirmation, for sundry reasons not now to be mentioned. It is enough that no such work hath been as yet attempted, nor is at this day publicly proposed, notwithstanding all the mercies that some have received, the losses which the church for want of it hath sustained, the judgments for sins that are feared, which ought to be motives thereunto. Yea, the generality of ecclesiastical persons seem to judge, that all things among them are as they ought to be, that there is no crime or disorder, but only in com-

plaining of their good estate, and calling upon them for reformation.

3. This being the state of the parochial churches in England, the inquiry is, whether every believer in England be indispensably obliged, by virtue of any law, rule, or direction of a divine original, to continue in constant complete communion with them, so as not to make use of any other ways and means of Christ's appointment for their own edification, on the penalty of the guilt of schism. Now although we do not (as we shall see immediately) lay the weight of refraining from their communion on this consideration, yet is there enough in it to warrant any man in his so doing. For a man in his conforming thereunto, makes it a part of his religious profession, not only that the church wherein he is joined is a true church, but that there is in its state and actings, a due representation of the mind of Christ, as unto what he requireth of his churches, and what he would have them to be. The Lord Christ is the apostle and high-priest of our profession; and in all things that belong thereunto, we declare that we do it in compliance with his will, and we do so, or we are hypocrites. This no man can do in such a church-state, who is convinced of its defects, without reflecting the greatest dishonour on Christ and the gospel.

More weight will be added unto this consideration when we shall treat of the matter of gospel churches, or of what sort of persons they ought to consist. In the mean time, those who pretend a reverence unto antiquity in those things wherein they suppose countenance to be given unto their interest, may do well sometimes to consider, what was the discipline of the primitive churches, and what were the manners, the lives, the heavenly conversations of their members. Because in the third and fourth centuries there is mention made of bishops distinct from presbyters, with some ecclesiastical practices and ceremonies in worship, not mentioned in the Scripture, nor known unto the apostolical churches, shall we judge ourselves obliged to conform thereunto as our rule and pattern, so as that in the judgment of some, they are to be esteemed no churches who conform not their outward state and practice unto the

same rule; and shall we judge ourselves at liberty to reject all that they did in the exercise of discipline, and in the preservation of purity of life and holiness in the churches, and that according to the command of Christ and rule of the Scripture? Who knows not upon what diligent trial, and experience first obtained of their knowledge, faith, and godliness, they admitted members into their churches? Yea, such was their care and severity herein that they would not admit a Roman emperor unto communion with them, unless he first confessed his sins, and joined amongst other penitents, before his admission. Euseb. lib. 6. cap. 33. Who knows not with what diligence they watched over the walkings and conversations of all that were admitted among them, and with what severity they animadverted on all that fell into scandalous sins? What was hereon their conversation in all holiness, righteousness, temperance, usefulness unto the world, in works of charity and benevolence, as all other Christian virtues, we have sufficient testimony. The heathen who were morally sober and virtuous, desired no more than that they might find out among them, an indulgence unto any sort of sin, crime, or wickedness, which because they could not charge any of them withal, they invented those brutish and foolish lies about their nightly meetings. But when a sober inquiry was made concerning them, their enemies were forced to confess, that they were guilty of no open sin, no adulteries, no swearings or perjuries, as is evident in the epistles of Pliny and Trajan the emperor. In particular they utterly rejected from their communion, all that resorted unto public stage plays or other spectacles, a solemn renunciation whereof was required of them who were admitted unto baptism when they were adult. See Clem. Pedag. lib. 3. cap. 12. If the reader would have an account of the lives and manners of the first churches in their members, he may find it in Clem. Epist. ad Cor. pp. 2—4. Justin Mart. Apol. 2. Tertullian in his Apol. and lib. 2. Ad Uxor. et de cultu fæminarum. Cyprian. Epist. 2. et 12. Euseb. Hist. lib. 9. cap. 8. Athanas. Epist. ad Solit. et Epiphan. lib. 3. t. 2. sect. 24. and the multiplied complaints of Chrysostom, concerning the beginning of degeneracy in this matter, with others. If the example of the

primitive churches had been esteemed of any value or authority in these things, much of our present differences had been prevented.

2. The constitution of these parochial assemblies is not from heaven but of men. There is almost nothing which is required unto the constitution of evangelical churches found in them; nor are they looked on by any as complete churches, but only as conveniencies for the observance of some parts of the worship of God. What some have in their wisdom found out for conveniency, others are engaged unto a compliance therewithal by necessity. For being born within the precincts of the parish, makes them to belong unto the assemblies of it, whether they will or no. To refrain from the communion of such churches, whose bond of relation consists only in cohabitation within the precincts of a political constitution, is a new kind of schism, which may be cured by a removal out of those precincts. If it be said that these parochial assemblies have their foundation in the light of nature, and are directed unto, in the institution of particular churches, in the Scripture, that they are not men's inventions for convenience, but have somewhat divine in them; I say, let them be left unto the warranty which they have from these causes and principles, let nothing be mixed in their constitution which is contrary unto them, nor let them be abridged of what they direct unto, and there will be no more contending about them, as unto their constitution. For instance; whatever there is of warranty in the light of nature, or direction in evangelical institutions for such assemblies, they absolutely suppose these three things:

(1.) That a conjunction in them is a voluntary act of free choice in them that so join together in them. Other kind of assemblies for the worship of God, neither the one nor the other do give the least countenance unto.

(2.) That they have in themselves sufficient right, power, and authority unto the attaining all the ends of such assemblies in holy worship and rule. Other kind of churches they know nothing of.

(3.) That they are enabled to preserve their own purity, and continue their own being. But all these things are denied unto our parochial assemblies by law, and therefore

they can claim no warranty from either of those principles. Wherefore, there can be no obligation upon any believer to join themselves with such churches in constant communion, as are judged none by them that appoint them, or partially and improperly only so; or are of such a constitution as hath in its essentially constituent parts no warranty either from the light of nature or Scripture direction, so as that his dissent from them should be esteemed schism. How far communion with them for some duties of worship, which is indeed all that they can pretend unto may be admitted, we do not now inquire.

3. There is not in them (and therefore not in the church of England, as unto its present profession) a fixed standard of truth, or rule of faith to be professed, which every believer may own, and have his part or interest therein. This I grant is not from the original constitution of the church, nor from what is established by any law therein, but from persons who at present have the declaration of its profession committed unto them. But from what cause soever it be, it is sufficient to warrant any man who takes care of his own edification and salvation, to use his own liberty in the choice of the most effectual means unto those ends. Wherefore some things may be added in farther explanation of this consideration. As,

(1.) It is the duty of every church, to be the ground and pillar of truth, to hold fast the form of wholesome words, or to keep the truth pure and uncorrupted, from all mixture of false doctrines, errors, heresies, or the speaking of perverse things in it, unto the hurt of the disciples of Christ. 1 Tim. iii. 15. 2 Tim. ii. 3. Acts xx. 28—30, &c. When any church ceaseth so to be, the obligation unto communion with it is dissolved.

(2.) This is the principal end of the ministry of the church in particular. Eph. iv. 11. 13. 1 Tim. vi. 20. And where those who possess and exercise it do eminently fail herein, it is the duty of others to withdraw from them. For,

(3.) Every private man's confession is included in the public profession of the church or assembly whereunto he belongs. And,

(4.) Oneness of argument in the truth, whereby we come to have 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism,' is the foundation

of all church communion; which if it be taken away, the whole fabric of it falls to the ground. If the trumpet in any church, as unto these things, gives an uncertain sound, no man knows how to prepare himself for the battle, or to 'fight the good fight of faith.'

It will be said that this cannot be justly charged on the church of England, yea, not without open wrong and injustice. For she hath a fixed invariable standard of truth in the thirty-nine Articles, which contain its public profession of faith, and the rule of its communion. Wherefore, I say, that it is not the primitive constitution of the church, nor its legal establishment that are reflected on; but only the present practice of so many as makes it necessary for men to take the care of their own edification on themselves. But here also some things are to be observed.

1. These articles at present are exceeding defective, in their being a fixed standard of the profession of truth, with respect unto those errors and heresies which have invaded and pestered the churches, since their framing and establishment. We know it was the constant invariable custom of the primitive churches, upon the emergency of any new errors or heresies, to add unto the rule and symbol of their confession, a testimony against them, so to preserve themselves from all communion in them, or participation of them. And a usage it was both necessary and laudable, as countenanced by Scripture example, however afterward it was abused. For no writing, such as all church confessions are, can obviate unforeseen heresies, or errors not broached at the time of its writing, but only that which is of divine institution, wherein infinite wisdom hath stored up provision of truth, for the destruction of all errors, that the subtlety or folly of man can invent. When these articles of the church of England were composed, neither Socinianism, nor Arminianism, which have now made such an inroad on some Protestant churches, were in the world, either name or things. Wherefore in their confession no testimony could be expressly given against them; though I acknowledge it is evident, from what is contained in the articles of it, and the approved exposition they received for a long time, in the writings of the most eminent persons of the church, that there is a virtual condemnation of all those errors, included.

therein. But in that state whereunto things are come amongst us, some more express testimony against them is necessary, to render any church the ground and pillar of truth.

2. Besides, a distinction is found out and passeth current among us, that the articles of this confession, are not articles of faith, but of outward agreement for peace's sake among ourselves; which is an invention to help on the ruin of religion. For articles of peace in religion concerning matters of faith, which he that subscribes, doth it not because they are true or articles of faith, are an engine to accommodate hypocrisy and nothing else. But according unto this supposition they are used at men's pleasure, and turned which way they have a mind to. Wherefore,

3. Notwithstanding this standard of truth, differences in important doctrines, wherein the edification of the souls of men are highly concerned, do abound among them, who manage the public profession of the church; I shall not urge this any farther by instances, in general it cannot modestly be denied. Neither is this spoken to abridge ministers of churches of their due liberty, in their management of the truths of the gospel. For such a liberty is to be granted, as,

(1.) Ariseth from the distinct gifts that men have received. For 'unto every one is grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ;' Eph. iv. 7. 'As every man hath received the gift, so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God;' 1 Pet. iv. 10.

(2.) As followeth on that spiritual wisdom which ministers receive in great variety, for the application of the truths of the gospel unto the souls and consciences of men. Hereon great variety in public church administrations will ensue, but all unto edification.

(3.) Such as consists in a different exposition of particular places of Scripture whilst the analogy of faith is kept and preserved. Rom. xii. 6.

(4.) Such as admits of different stated apprehensions in and about such doctrines, as wherein the practice and comfort of Christians are not immediately, nor greatly concerned. Such a liberty, I say, as the dispensation of spiritual gifts,

and the different manner of their exercise as the unsearchable depths that are in the Scripture not to be fathomed at once by any church, or any sort of persons whatever, and our knowing the best of us but in part, with the difference of men's capacities and understandings in and about things not absolutely necessary unto edification, must be allowed in churches and their ministry. But I speak of that variety of doctrines, which is of greater importance. Such it is, as will set men at liberty to make their own choice in the use of means for their edification. And if such novel opinions, about the person, grace, satisfaction, and righteousness of Christ, about the work of the Holy Spirit of God, in regeneration or the renovation of our nature into the image of God, as abound in some churches, should at any time by the suffrage of the major part of them who by law are intrusted with its conduct, be declared as the sense of the church, it is and would be sufficient to absolve any man from an obligation unto its communion, by virtue of its first institution and establishment.

4. Evangelical discipline is neither observed, nor attainable in these parochial assemblies; nor is there any relief provided by any other means for that defect. This hath in general been spoken unto before; but because it belongs in an especial manner unto the argument now in hand, I shall yet farther speak unto it. For to declare my mind freely, I do not judge that any man can incur the guilt of schism, who refrains from the communion of the church, wherein the dicipline of the gospel is either wholly wanting, or is perverted into rule and domination which hath no countenance given unto it in the word of truth. And we may observe,

1. The discipline of the church is that alone for which any rule or authority is given unto it or exercised in it. Authority is given unto the ministers of the church, to dispense the word, and administer the sacraments; which, I know not why, some call the key of order. But the only end why the Lord Christ hath given authority, or rule, or power for it unto the church, or any in it, it is for the exercise of discipline, and no other. Whatever power, rule, dignity, or pre-eminence is assumed in the churches, not merely for this end, is usurpation and tyranny.

2. The outward means appointed by Jesus Christ; for the preservation of his churches in order, peace, and purity, consists in this discipline. He doth by his word give directions and commands for this end, and it is by discipline alone that they are executed. Wherefore without it, the church cannot live in its health, purity, and vigour; the word and sacraments are its spiritual food, whereon its life doth depend. But without that exercise and medicinal applications unto its distempers, which are made by discipline, it cannot live a healthy, vigorous, faithful life, in the things of God.

3. This discipline is either private or public.

(1.) That which is private consists in the mutual watch that all the members of the church have over one another, with admonitions, exhortations, and reproofs, as their edification doth require. The loss of this part of the discipline of Christ in most churches, hath lost us much of the glory of Christian profession.

(2.) That which is public, in the rulers of the church with and by its own consent. The nature and acts of it will be afterward considered.

4. There are three things considerable in this discipline. (1.) The power and authority whereby it is exercised. (2.) The manner of its administration. (3.) The especial object of it, both as it is susceptive of members, and corrective; whereunto we may add its general end.

(1.) The authority of it, is only a power and liberty to act, and ministerially exercise the authority of Christ himself. As unto those by whom it is exercised, it is in them an act of obedience unto the command of Christ; but with respect unto its object the authority of Christ is exerted in it. That which is exercised on any other warranty or authority (as none can exert the authority of Christ, but by virtue of his own institutions), whose acts are not acts of obedience unto Christ, whatever else it be, it belongs not unto the discipline of evangelical churches.

(2.) As unto the manner of its administration, as it is that which the Lord Christ hath appointed to express his love, care, and tenderness towards the church. Hence the acts of it which are corrective are called lamenting or bewailing of them towards whom they are exercised; 2 Cor. xii. 20.

Whatever therefore is done in it that is not expressive of the love, care, patience, and holiness of Christ, is dishonourable unto him.

(3.) The object of it, as it is susceptive of members, is professed believers; and as it is corrective, it is those who stubbornly deviate from the rule of Christ, or live in disobedience of his commands. Wherefore the general end of its institution is to be a representation of the authority, wisdom, love, care, and patience of Christ towards his church, with a testimony unto the certainty, truth, and holiness of his future judgment. The especial nature of it shall be afterward considered.

Unto this discipline, either as unto its right or exercise, there is no pretence in parochial assemblies, yea, it is expressly forbidden unto them. Whereas, therefore, it is a matter of so great importance in itself, so subservient unto the glory of Christ, so useful and necessary unto the edification of his disciples, so weighty a part of our professed subjection unto him, without which no church can be continued in gospel purity, order, and peace; the total want or neglect of it, is a sufficient cause for any man who takes care of his own salvation, or is concerned in the glory and honour of Christ, to refrain the communion of those churches, wherein it is so wanting or neglected, or at least not to confine himself thereunto.

It will be said that this defect is supplied, in that the administration of church discipline is committed unto others, namely, the bishops and their officers, that are more meet and able for it, than the ministers and people of parochial assemblies. What therefore is wanting in them, is supplied fully another way, so that no pretence can be taken from hence, for refraining communion in them. But it will be said,

1. That this discipline is not to be placed where and in what hands men please, but to be left where Christ hath disposed it.

2. That one reason of the unmeetness of parochial churches for the exercise of this discipline, is because they have been unjustly deprived of it for so many ages.

3. It is to be inquired, whether the pretended discipline doth in any thing answer that which Christ hath plainly and expressly ordained. For if a discipline should

be erected whose right of exercise is derived from secular power, whose administration is committed unto persons who pretend not in the least unto any office of divine institution, as chancellors, commissaries, officials, &c. every way unknown unto antiquity, foreign unto the churches over which they rule; exercising their pretended power of discipline, in a way of civil jurisdiction, without the least regard unto the rules or ends of evangelical discipline, managing its administration in brawlings, contentions, revilings, fees, pecuniary mulcts, &c. in open defiance of the spirit, example, rule, and commands of our Lord Jesus Christ; it would be so far from supplying this defect, that it would exceedingly aggravate the evil of it. God forbid, that any Christian should look on such a power of discipline, and such an administration of it, to be that which is appointed by Jesus Christ, or any way participant of the nature of it. Of what expediency it may be unto other ends, I know not; but unto ecclesiastical discipline it hath no alliance, and therefore in its exercise, so far as it is corrective, it is usually applied unto the best and most sober Christians.

Wherefore to deal plainly in this case; whereas there is neither the power nor exercise of discipline in parochial assemblies, or their ministry, not so much by their own neglect, as because their right thereunto is denied, and its exercise wholly forbidden by them in whose power they are; and whereas in the supply that is made of this defect, a secular power is erected, coercive by pecuniary and corporal penalties administered by persons no way relating unto the churches over which they exercise this power, by rules of human laws and constitutions, in litigious and oppressive courts, in the room of that institution of Christ, whose power and exercise is spiritual, by spiritual means, according to the Scripture rules; it is lawful for any man who takes care of his own salvation, and of the means of it, to withdraw from the communion of such churches, so far as it hinders or forbids him the use of the means appointed by Christ for his edification. Men may talk what they please of schism, but he that forsakes the conduct of his own soul, in things of so plain an evidence, must answer for it at his own peril.

4. This defect in parochial churches, that they are

intrusted by law with no part of the rule of themselves, but are wholly governed and disposed of by others at their pleasure, in the ways before mentioned, which shakes their very being as churches, though there be in them assemblies for divine worship, founded in common right and the light of nature, wherein men may be accepted with God; is accompanied with such other wants and defects also, as will weaken any obligation unto complete and constant communion with them. I shall give one only instance hereof. The people's free choice of all their officers, bishops, elders, pastors, &c. is in our judgment of divine institution, by virtue of apostolical example and directions. It is also so suitable unto the light of nature, namely, that in a society absolutely founded in the voluntary consent of them who enter into it, and doth actually exist thereby, without any necessity imposed on them from prescription, former usage, or the state of being born in and under such rules and laws, as it is with men in their political societies, the people should have the election of them who are to rule among them and over them; there being no provision of a right unto a successive imposition of any such rulers on them, without their own consent, that nothing can rationally be pleaded against it. And therefore, whereas in all ordinarily settled governments in the world, setting aside the confusion of their originals, by war and conquests, the succession of rulers is either by natural generation, the rule being confined unto such a line, or by a popular election, or by a temperature of both; there hath been a new way invented for the communication of power and rule in churches, never exemplified in any political society; namely, that it shall neither be successive, as it was under the Old Testament, nor elective, nor by any temperature of these two ways in one, but by a strange kind of flux of it, through the hands of men who pretend to have so received it themselves from others. But whether hereon the people of the church can have that respect and devotion unto them, as they would have unto hereditary rulers (long succession in rulers, being the great cause of veneration in the people), especially such as had a succession one unto another by a natural descent through divine appointment, as the priests had under the law, or as unto those whom on the account of their worth, ability, and fitness for the work of

the ministry among them, they do choose themselves, they may do well to consider, who are concerned. The necessity there is of maintaining a reputation and interest by secular grandeur, pomp, and power, of ruling the people of the church in church matters by external force, with many other inconveniencies, do all proceed from this order of things, or rather disorder, in the call of men unto the ministry. And hence it is that the city of God, and the people of Christ therein, which is indeed the only true free society in the world, have rulers in it and over them, neither by a natural right of their own, as in paternal government nor by hereditary succession, nor by election, nor by any way or means wherein their own consent is included, but are under a yoke of an imposition of rulers on them, above any society on the earth whatever. Besides, there is that relation between the church and its guides, that no law, order, or constitution can create without their mutual voluntary consent. And therefore this right and liberty of the people in every church to choose their own spiritual officers, was for many ages preserved sacredly in the primitive times. But hereof there is no shadow remaining in our parochial churches; sundry persons, as patrons, and ordinaries, have a concurring interest into the imposing of a minister, or such whom they esteem so, upon any such church, without the knowledge, consent, or approbation of the body of the church, either desired or accepted. If there be any who cannot comply with this constitution of things relating unto the ministry, because it is a part of their profession of the gospel which they are to make in the world, which yet really consists only in an avowed subjection unto the commands of Christ, they can be no way obnoxious unto any charge of schism upon their refusal so to do. For a schism that consists in giving a testimony unto the institutions of Christ, and standing fast in the liberty wherewith he hath made disciples free, is that whose guilt no man need to fear.

5. What remaineth of those reasons whereon those who cannot comply with the conformity under consideration, are cleared in point of conscience from any obligation thereunto, and so from all guilt of schism whatever, belongs unto the head of impositions on their consciences and practice which they must submit unto. These being such as many whole

books have been written about, the chief whereof have no way been answered, unless railings and scoffings with contempt, and fierce reproaches with false accusations, may pass for answers, I shall not here again insist upon them. Some few things of that nature I shall only mention, and put an end unto this dispute.

1. The conformity required of ministers consists in a public assent and consent unto the book of Common Prayer, with the rubric in it, which contains all the whole practice of the church of England, in its commands and prohibitions. Now these being things that concern the worship of God in Christ, the whole entire state, order, rule, and government of the gospel church, whoever gives solemnly this assent and consent, unless he be allowed to enter his protestation against those things which he dislikes, and of the sense wherein he doth so assent and consent, which by law is allowed unto none, the said assent and consent is his public profession, that all these things, and all contained in them, are according to the mind of Christ, and that the ordering of them, as such, is part of their professed subjection unto his gospel. Blessed be God, most ministers are too wise and honest, to delude their consciences with distinctions, equivocations, and reservations, and do thereon rather choose to suffer penury and penalty, than to make the least intrenchment upon their own consciences, or the honour of the gospel in their profession. What they do and declare of this nature, they must do it in sincerity, as in the sight of God, as approving what they do, not only as pardonable effects of necessity, but as that which is the best they have or can do in the worship of God; with a solemn renunciation of whatever is contrary unto what they do so approve. And whether this be a meet imposition on the consciences of ministers, with reference unto a great book or volume of a various composition, unto things almost without number, wherein exceptions have been given of old and lately, not answered, nor answerable, with rules, laws, orders, not pretending to be scriptural prescriptions, is left unto the judgment of all, who have due thoughts of their approaching account before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ.

2. The conformity that is required of others, being precisely, and without power of dispensation in them by whom

it is required, to answer the rule or law of it before declared, every man, by his so conforming, doth thereby take it on his conscience, and make it part of his Christian profession, that all which he so conforms unto, is not only what he may do, but what he ought to do, both in matter and manner, so far as the law, or any part of it, doth determine or enjoin them. No man is allowed to make either distinction or protestation with respect unto any thing contained in the rules, and therefore whatever he doth in compliance therewith, is interpretable in the sight of God and man, as an approbation of the whole. Sincerity and openness in profession is indispensably required of us in order unto our salvation. And therefore to instruct men as unto the worship of God, to do what they do not judge to be their duty to do, but only hope they may do it without sin, or to join themselves in and unto that performance of it, which either they approve not of as the best, in the whole, or not lawful or approvable in some parts of it, is to instruct them unto the debauching of their consciences and ruin of their own souls. Let 'every one be persuaded in his own mind; for what is not of faith, is sin.'

3. There is in this conformity required a renunciation of all other ways of public worship, or means of edification, that may be made use of. For they are all expressly forbidden in the rule of that conformity. No man therefore can comply with that rule, but that a renunciation of all other public ways of edification as unlawful, is part of the visible profession which they make. 'Video meliora proboque deteriora sequor,' is no good plea in religion. It is uprightness and integrity that will preserve men, and nothing else. He that shall endeavour to cheat his conscience by distinctions and mental reservations, in any concernment of religious worship, I fear he hath little of it, if any at all, that is good for aught.

On these suppositions, I say, the imposition of the things so often contended about, on the consciences and profession of Christians, as namely, the constant sole use of the Liturgy in all church administrations, in the matter and manner prescribed; the use and practice of all canonical ceremonies, the religious observation of stated holidays, with other things of the like nature, is sufficient to warrant any sober, peaceable disciple of Christ, who takes care of his own edification and

salvation, to refrain the communion required in this rule of conformity, unless he be fully satisfied in his own mind, that all that it requires, is according to the mind of Christ, and all that it forbids is disapproved by him. And whereas the whole entire matter of all these impositions, are things whereof the Scripture, and the primitive churches, know nothing at all, nor is there any rumour of them to be imposed in or on any church of Christ for some centuries of years, I can but pity poor men who must bear the charge and penalties of schism for dissenting from them, as well as admire the fertility of their inventions, who can find out arguments to manage such a charge on their account.

But whereas the dissent declared from that communion with parochial assemblies, is that whereon we are so fiercely charged with the guilt of schism, and so frequently called schismatics, I shall divert a little to inquire into the nature and true notion of schism itself; and so much the rather, because I find the author of the Unreasonableness of Separation, omit any inquiry thereinto, that he might not lose the advantage of any pretended description or aggravation of it.

CHAP. XI.

Of schism.

Although it be no part of my present design to treat of the nature of schism, yet with respect unto what hath already been discoursed, and to manifest our unconcernment in the guilt of it, I shall, as was said, divert to give a plain and brief account of it. And in our inquiry, I must declare myself wholly unconcerned in all the discords, divisions, and seditions, that have fallen out among Christians in the latter ages, about things that were of their own invention. Schism is a sin against Christian love, with reference unto the deportment of men in and about the institutions of Christ and their communion in them. As for contentions, divisions, or separations amongst men, about that order, agreement, unity, or uniformity which are of their own appoint-

ment, whatever moral evil they have had in them, they do not belong unto that church schism which we inquire after. Such have been the horrid divisions and fightings that have prevailed at seasons in the church of Rome, a departure from whose self-constituted state, order, and rule, hath not the least affinity unto schism. It will not therefore be admitted, that any thing can fall under the note and guilt of schism, which hath not respect unto some church-state, order, rule, unity, or uniformity, that is of Christ's institution.

There are three notions of schism that deserve our consideration.

1. The first is that of divisions among the members of the same church, all of them abiding still in the same outward communion, without any separation into distinct parties. And unto schism in this notion of it, three things do concur.

1. Want of that mutual love, condescension, and forbearance, which are required in all the members of the same church, with the moral evils of whisperings, back-bitings, and evil surmises, that ensue thereon.

2. All undue adherence unto some church offices above others, causing disputes and janglings.

3. Disorder in the attendance unto the duties of church assemblies, and the worship of God performed in them. This is the only notion of schism, that is exemplified in the Scripture, the only evil that is condemned under that name; this will appear unto any who shall with heedfulness read the Epistles of Paul the apostle unto the Corinthians, wherein alone the nature of this evil is stated and exemplified. But this consideration of schism hath been almost utterly lost for many ages; whatever men do in churches, so that they depart not from the outward communion of them, it would be accounted ridiculous to esteem them schismatics. Yet this is that which if not only, yet principally, the consciences of men are to regard, if they will avoid the guilt of schism. But this notion of it, as was said, being not suited unto the interest or advantages of any sort of men, in the charge of it on others; nor any way subservient to secure the inventions and impositions of the most, is on the matter lost in the world.

2. The second instance of ecclesiastical schism, was

given us in the same church of the Corinthians afterward, an account whereof we have in the epistle of Clemens, or of the church of Rome unto them about it, the most eminent monument of primitive antiquity; after the writings by divine inspiration. And that which he calls schism in that church, he calls also strife, contention, sedition, tumult: and it may be observed concerning that schism, as all the ancients call it,

1. That the church continued its state and outward communion. There is no mention of any that separated from it, that constituted a new church; only in the same church they agreed not, but were divided among themselves. Want of love and forbearance, attended with strife and contention among the members of the same church, abiding in the same outward communion, was the schism they were guilty of.

2. The effect of this schism was, that the body of the church, or multitudes of the members, by the instigation of some few disorderly persons, had deposed their elders and rulers from their offices, and probably had chosen others in their places, though that be not mentioned expressly in the epistle.

3. That the church itself is not blamed, for assuming a power unto themselves to depose their elders; much less that they had done it without the consent, advice, or authority of any bishop, or other church; but only that they had dealt unjustly with those whom they had deposed, who in the judgment of the church of Rome, unto which they had written for advice, were esteemed not only innocent, but such as had laudably and profitably discharged their office, whereon the whole blame is cast on those who had instigated the church unto this procedure.

4. There was not yet, nor in a hundred and fifty years after, the least mention or intimation, of any schism in a dissent from any humanly invented rules or canons, for order, government, or worship in any church, or religious ceremonies imposed on the practice of any in divine service, that is on any church, or any of the members of it. There is not the least rumour of any such things in primitive antiquity, no instance to be given of any man charged with schism for a dissent from such a rule. Any such rule, and any ecclesiastical censure upon it, is apocryphal, not only

unto the Scripture, but unto that which I call primitive antiquity. The first attempt of any thing in this kind, was in reference unto the time and day of the observation of Easter. This was the first instance among Christians of an endeavour to impose the observation of human or church constitutions or groundless traditions, on any churches or persons in them. And whereas that which was called a schism between the churches of Italy and Asia, or some of them, did ensue thereon; we have a most illustrious testimony from the best, the wisest, and the holiest of that age (for Irenæus in France, and Polycrates in Asia, were not alone herein), that the blame of all that division and schism was to be charged on them who attempted to deprive the churches of their liberty, and impose on them a necessity of the observation of the time and season which they had determined on: after a rebuke was given unto the attempt of the Judaizing Christians, to impose the observation of Mosaical ceremonies, from the pretence of their divine institution, on the churches of the Gentiles, by the apostles themselves; this was the original of all endeavours, to impose human constitutions for which there was no such pretence, upon the practice of any. And as it was an original not unmeet for the beginning and foundation of such impositions, being in a matter of no use unto the edification of the church; so it received such a solemn rebuke at its first entrance and attempt, that had it not been for the ignorance, pride, interest and superstition of some in the following ages, it had perished without imitation. The account hereof is given in Eusebius, lib. 5. cap. 21—23. as also of the rule which then prevailed, though afterward shamefully forsaken, namely, that an agreement in the faith was the only rule of communion, which ought to be kept under any diversity in voluntary observations. And the discourse of Socrates on this occasion, lib. 5. cap. 21. concerning the non-institution of any days of fastings or feastings, or other rites or ceremonies then in use, with the liberty which is therefore to be left in such things unto all Christians, is the plain truth, whatever some except against it, declared with much judgment and moderation.

This beginning, I say, had the imposition of unscriptural, uninstituted rites, ceremonies, and religious observations,

among the churches of Christ, and this solemn rebuke was given unto it. Howbeit the ignorance, superstition, and interest of following ages, with the contempt of all modesty, brake through the boundaries of this holy rebuke, until their own impositions and observations became the substance of all their church discipline, unto the total subversion of Christian liberty.

Wherefore to allow church rulers, or such as pretend so to be, a liberty and power to appoint a rule of communion, comprising institutions and commands of sundry things, to be constantly observed in the whole worship and discipline of the church, not warranted in themselves by divine authority, and then to charge believers, abiding firm in the doctrine of the faith with schism, for a non-compliance with such commands and appointments, is that which neither in the Scripture, nor in primitive antiquity, hath either instance, example, president, testimony, rumour, or report, to give countenance unto it: the pedigree of this practice cannot be derived one step higher than the fact of Victor the bishop of Rome, in the excommunication of the churches and Christians of Asia, which was solemnly condemned as an intrenchment on Christian liberty.

3. After these things the notion of schism began to be managed variously, according unto the interest of them who seemed to have the most advantage in the application of it, unto those who dissented from them. It were an endless thing to express the rise and declare the progress of these apprehensions. But after many loose and declamatory discourses about it, they are generally issued in two heads. The first is, that any kind of dissent from the pope and church of Rome is schism, all the schism that is or can be in the world. The other is, that a causeless separation from a true church is schism, and this only is so. But whereas in this pretended definition, there is no mention of any of its internal causes, nor of its formal reason, but a bare description of it by an outward effect, it serves only for a weapon in every man's hand to perpetuate digladiations about it. For every church esteems itself true, and every one that separates himself, esteems himself to have just cause so to do.

In the following times, especially after the rise and pre-

valency of the Arian heresy, it was ordinary for those of the orthodox persuasion, to forsake the communion of those churches wherein Arian bishops did preside, and to gather themselves into separate meetings or conventicles for divine worship, for which they were accused of schism, and in sundry places punished accordingly, yea, some of them unto the loss of their lives. Yet I suppose there are none now who judge them to have been schismatics.

The separation of Novatus, and Donatus, from the communion of the whole catholic visible church, on unwarrantable pretences, is that which makes the loudest noise about schism in antiquity. That there was in what was done by them and their followers, the general nature, and moral evil of causeless schisms and divisions, will be easily granted. But it is that wherein we are not concerned, be the especial nature of schism what it will. Nor did they make use of any one reason, whereon the merit of the present cause doth depend. The Novatians (the modester sect of the two) pretended only a defect in discipline, in granting church communion unto such as they would not have received, though they were apparently in the wrong, proceeding on mistaken principles. The Donatists pleaded only some personal crimes in some few bishops, fallen into in the time of persecution, which they could never prove, and thereon grew angry with all the world, who would not condemn them and renounce their communion as well as they. These slight pretences they made the occasion and reason of renouncing the communion of the whole visible catholic church, in all its distributions for communion, that is, all particular churches; and confined sacraments and salvation absolutely unto their own parties. And hereon they fell into many other woful miscarriages, especially those of the latter sort. It is indifferent by what name any are pleased to call this evil and folly. A sin and evil it was, schism or what you please to term it, and justly condemned by all Christians not joining with them, in those days. And that which was the animating principle of the tumult of the Donatists, was a supposition, that the continuation of the true church-state depended on the successive ordination of bishops, which having, as they thought (unduly enough), failed in one or two instances, it became the destruction of a church-state,

not only in the churches where such mistakes had happened as they surmised, but unto all the churches in the world that would hold communion with them.

But in these things we have no concernment. Other notions of schism besides those insisted on, we acknowledge not, nor is any other advanced with the least probability of truth. Nor are we to be moved with outcries about schism, wherein, without regard to truth or charity, men contend for their own interest. Of those notions of it which have been received by men, sober and learned, we decline a trial by none; that only excepted, that the refusal of obedience unto the pope and church of Rome, is all that is schism in the world, which indeed is none at all.

That which is now so fiercely pleaded by some concerning different observations of external modes, rites, customs, some more, or none at all, to make men schismatics, is at once to judge all the primitive churches to be schismatical. Their differences, varieties, and diversities among them, about these things, cannot be enumerated; and so without any disadvantage unto the faith, or breach of love, they continued to be until all church-order and power was swallowed up in the papal tyranny, ten thousand times more pernicious, than ten thousand such disputes.

For a close unto this whole discourse, concerning the original nature and state of gospel churches, I shall use that liberty which love of the truth puts into my possession. Churches mentioned in the Scripture, ordained and appointed by the authority of Jesus Christ, were nothing but a certain number of men and women converted to God by the preaching of the gospel, with their baptized seed, associating themselves in obedience unto Christ's commands, and by the direction of his apostles, for the common profession of the same faith, the observance and performance of all divine institutions of religious worship, unto the glory of God, their own edification, and the conversion of others. These believers, thus associated in societies, knowing the command and appointment of Jesus Christ by his apostles for that end, did choose from among themselves, such as were to be their rulers, in the name and authority of Christ, according to the law and order of his institutions, who in the Scripture are called, on various considerations, elders,

bishops, pastors, and the like names of dignity, authority, and office; who were to administer all the solemn ordinances of the church among them. Unto this office they were solemnly appointed, ordained, or set apart, by the apostles themselves, with fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands, or by other ordinary officers after their decease.

This was the way and method of the call and setting apart of all ordinary officers in the church, both under the Old Testament and in the New. It is founded in the light of nature. In the first institution of ordinary church rulers under the law, the people looked out and chose fit persons, whom Moses set apart to the office, Deut. i. 13—15. And in the call of deacons, Acts vi. the apostle uses the same words, or words of the same importance unto the church, as Moses did to the people, Acts vi. 31. asserting the continuation of the same way and order in their call. And whereas he who was first to be called to office under the New Testament after the ascension of Christ, fell under a double consideration, namely, of an officer in general, and of an apostle, which office was extraordinary, there was a threefold act in his call; the people chose two; one of which was to be an officer, Acts i. 23. God's immediate determination of one, as he was to be an apostle, ver. 24. and the obedient consent of the people in compliance with that determination, ver. 26.

The foundation of these churches was generally in a small number of believers. But that church-state was not complete until they were supplied with all ordinary officers, as bishops and deacons. The former were of several sorts, as shall be proved hereafter. And of them there were many in every church, whose number was increased as the members of the church were multiplied. So God appointed in the church of the Jews, that every ten families should have a peculiar ruler of their own choice; Deut. i. 13—15.

For there is no mention in the New Testament of any one single bishop or elder, in any church, of any sort whatever, either absolutely or by way of pre-eminence. But as the elders of each church were many, at least more than one, so there was a parity among them, and an equality in order, power, and rule. Nor can any instance be given unto the contrary.

Of these churches one only was originally planted, in one city, town, or village. This way was taken from conveniency for edification, and not from any positive institution; and it may be otherwise where conveniency and opportunity do require it. The number in these churches multiplying daily, there was a necessity of the multiplication of bishops or elders among them. Hereon the advantage of some one person in priority of conversion, or of ordination, in age, gifts, and graces, especially in ability for preaching the gospel and administering the holy ordinances of the church, with the necessity of preserving order in the society of the elders themselves, gave him peculiar dignity, pre-eminence and title. He was soon after the bishop without any disadvantage to the church.

For in those churches, in some of them at least, evangelists continued for a long season, who had the administration of church affairs in their hands. And some there were, who were of note among the apostles, and eminently esteemed by them, who had eminent, yea, apostolical gifts, as to preaching of the word and prayer, which was the peculiar work of the apostle. These were the ἄνδρες ἐλλόγιμοι mentioned by Clemens. Of the many other elders who were associated in the rule of the church, it may be not many had gifts for the constant preaching of the word, nor were called thereunto. Hence Justin Martyr seems to assign the constant public administration of sacred ordinances unto one president. And this also promoted the constant presidency of one, in whom the apostolical aid by evangelists might be supplied. These churches, thus fixed and settled in one place (each of them), city, town, or village, were each of them intrusted with all the power and privileges which the Lord Christ hath granted unto, or endued his church withal. This power is called the power of the keys, or of binding and loosing, which hath respect only unto the consciences of men, as unto things spiritual and eternal, being merely ministerial.

Every one of these churches were bound by the command of Christ to live in peace and unity, through the exercise of peculiar, sincere, and fervent love among all their members; as also to walk in peace and useful communion with all other

churches in the world, according as they had opportunity of converse with them. And when on any occasion any division or schism fell out among any of their members in this church-state, it was severely rebuked by the apostles.

All these churches, and all the members of them, were obliged by virtue of divine institution to obey their guides, to honour and reverence them, and by their voluntary contribution, to provide for their honourable subsistence and maintenance, according to their ability. Other church-state neither the Scripture nor antiquity unto the end of the second century do know any thing of; which I shall hereafter more fully manifest. Neither was there any thing known then to be schism or so esteemed, but a division falling out in some one of these churches; which happened for the most part, if not only, by some of their teachers falling into heresy and drawing away disciples after them, Acts xx. 30. or by various opinions about their guides, 1 Cor. i. 12. or the ambition of some in seeking the power and authority of office among them. To seek for any thing among those churches, wherein our present contest about schism is concerned, is altogether in vain. There was then no such subordination of churches, of many unto one, as is now pleaded; no such distinction of officers, into those who have a plenary and those who have a partiary power only, in the rule of the church; no church with a single officer over it, comprehending in a subjection unto its jurisdiction, a multitude of other churches; no invention, no imposition of any orders, forms of prayer, or ceremonies of worship not of divine institution were once thought of; and when any thing of that nature was first attempted, it caused great troubles amongst them. In a word, the things on the account of a noncompliance wherewithal we are vehemently charged with schism, were then neither laid nor hatched, neither thought of, nor invented.

To erect new kinds of churches, to introduce into them new orders, new rules, rites, and ceremonies, to impose their observation on all churches, and all members of them, and to charge their dissent with the guilt of schism, that schism which is prohibited and condemned in the Scripture, hath much of an assumed authority and severity in it, no-

thing of countenance from the Scripture or primitive antiquity.

But after that churches began to depart from this original constitution by the ways and means before declared, every alteration produced a new supposition of church-unity and peace, whereto every church of a new constitution laid claim; new sorts of schism were also coined and framed. For there was a certain way found out and carried on in a mystery of iniquity, whereby those meek, holy, humble churches or societies of Christ's institution who, as such, had nothing to do with the things of the world, in power, authority, dignity, jurisdiction, or wealth, in some instances wherein they got the advantage one of another, became in all these things to equal kingdoms and principalities; yea, one of them to claim a monarchy over the whole world.

During the progression of this apostacy, church-unity and schism declined from their centre, and varied their state according unto the present interest of them that prevailed. Whoever had got possession of the name of the church in a prevailing reputation, though the state of it was never so corrupt, made it bite and devour all that disliked it, and would swear that submission unto them in all things was church-unity, and to dissent from them was schism. Unto that state all the world know that things were come in the church of Rome. Howbeit what hath been disputed about, or contended for, of power, privileges, authority, pre-eminence, jurisdiction, catholicism, ways of worship, rule, and discipline, which the world is filled with such a noise about; and in the dispute whereof so many various hypotheses are advanced, that cannot be accommodated unto such Christian congregations as we have described, are but the effects of the prudence or imprudence of men, and what it will prove the event will shew.

Things of this nature being once well understood, will deliver the world from innumerable fruitless, endless contests; sovereign princes from all disturbance on the account of religion, and private persons from the fatal mistake of intrusting the eternal concernments of their souls, unto their relation unto one church, and not unto another; I am not so vain as at this time to expect the reduction of Christian reli-

gion unto its primitive power, purity, and simplicity; nor do I reflect blame on them, who walk conscientiously in such a church-state and order as they approve of, or suppose it the best they can attain unto; only I think it lawful for all Christ's disciples at all times, to yield obedience unto all his commands, and to abstain from being servants of men in what he hath not enjoined.

AN ANSWER

TO

DR. STILLINGFLEET'S BOOK

OF THE

UNREASONABLENESS OF SEPARATION;

IN DEFENCE OF THE

VINDICATION OF NONCONFORMISTS

FROM

THE GUILT OF SCHISM.

The preceding discourse was written, for the most part, before the publishing of the treatise of the Rev. Dr. Stillingfleet, entitled the Unreasonableness of Separation. Yet was it not so without a prospect, at least a probable conjecture, that something of the same kind and tendency with the doctor's book, would be published in defence of the cause which he had undertaken. And I was not without hopes, that the whole of it might have been both finished and communicated unto public view, before any thing farther were attempted against our cause, whereby many mistakes might have been prevented. For as I was willing, yea, very desirous, if it were the will of God, that I might see before my departure out of this world, the cause of conformity, as things are now stated between us and the church of England, pleaded with judgment, moderation, and learning, with the best of those arguments whereby our principles or practices are opposed; so, considering on what hand that work was now like to fall, I thought, 'si pergama dextra,' &c. and am of the same mind still. But my expectation being frustrate, of representing our whole cause truly stated, for the prevention of mistakes, by the coming out of this book against all sorts of nonconformists, I thought it convenient to publish

this first part of what I had designed, and to annex unto it the ensuing Defence of the Vindication of Nonconformists, from the Charge of Schism. For although I do know that there is nothing material in the whole book of the Unreasonableness of Separation, but what is obviated or answered beforehand, in the preceding discourse; so as that the principles and demonstrations of them contained therein may easily be applied unto all the reasonings, exceptions, and pleas, in and of that book, to render them useless unto the end designed, which is to reinforce a charge of schism against us; yet I think it necessary to shew how unsuccessful, from the disadvantage of his cause, the doctor hath been in his laborious endeavour to stigmatize all Protestant dissenters from the church of England, with the odious name of schismatics. I have therefore altered nothing of what I had projected, either as to matter or method in this first part of the discourse designed on the whole subject of church affairs. For as I have not found either cause or reason from any thing in the doctor's book to make the least change in what I had written, so my principal design being the instruction and confirmation of them who have no other interest in these things, but only to know and perform their own duty, I was not willing to give them the trouble of perpetual diversions from the matter in hand, which all controversial writings are subject unto. Wherefore, having premised some general considerations of things insisted on by the doctor of no great influence into the cause in hand, and vindicated one principle, a supposition whereof we rely upon, namely, the declension of the churches in the ages after the apostles, especially after the end of the second century, from the primitive institution of their state, rule, and order, in the preface; I shall now proceed to consider and examine distinctly what is opposed unto the defence of our innocency as unto the guilt of schism. But some things must be premised hereunto. As,

1. I shall not depart from the state of the question as laid down by ourselves on our part, as unto our judgment of parochial churches, and our refraining from communion with them. Great pains is taken to prove the several sorts of dissenters to be departed farther from the church of England than they will themselves allow, and on such principles as

are disavowed by them. But no disputations can force our assent unto what we know to be contrary unto our principles and persuasions.

2. We do allow those parochial assemblies, which have a settled unblamable ministry among them, to be true churches, so far as they can pretend themselves so to be; churches, whose original is from occasional cohabitation within precincts limited by the law of the land; churches, without church-power to choose or ordain their officers, to provide for their own continuation, to admit or exclude members, or to reform at any time what is amiss among them; churches, which are in all things under the rule of those who are set over them, by virtue of civil constitutions, foreign unto them, not submitted willingly unto by them, and such for the most part as whose offices and power, have not the least countenance given unto them from the Scripture or the practice of the primitive churches; such as are chancellors, commissaries, officials, and the like; churches in which, for the most part, through a total neglect in evangelical discipline, there is a great degeneracy from the exercise of brotherly love, and the holiness of Christian profession: whatever can be ascribed unto such churches, we willingly allow unto them.

3. We do and shall abide by this principle, that communion in faith and love, with the administration of the same sacraments, is sufficient to preserve all Christians from the guilt of schism, although they cannot communicate together in some rites and rules of worship and order. As we will not admit of any presumed notions of schism, and inferences from them, nor allow that any thing belongs thereunto, which is not contrary to gospel love, rules, and precepts, in the observance of Christ's institutions; so we affirm and shall maintain that men, abiding in the principles of communion mentioned, walking peaceably among themselves, refraining communion with others, peaceably, wherein they dissent from them, ready to join with other churches in the same confession of faith, and in the defence of it, and to concur with them in promoting all the real ends of Christian religion, not judging the church-state of others, so as to renounce all communion with them, as condemning them to be no churches; continuing in the occasional ex-

ercise of all duties of love towards them and their members, are unduly charged with the guilt of schism, to the disadvantage of the common interest of the Protestant religion amongst us.

4. Whereas there are two parts of the charge against us, the one for refraining from total communion with parochial assemblies, which what it is, and wherein it doth consist, hath been before declared; the other for gathering ourselves into another church-order in particular congregations, as the reasons and grounds of the things themselves are distinct, so must they have a distinct consideration, and be examined distinctly and apart.

These things being premised, I shall proceed to examine what the reverend doctor hath farther offered, against our former vindication of the nonconformists from the charge of schism; and I desire the reader to take notice, that we delight not in these contentions, that we desire nothing but mutual love and forbearance; but we are compelled by all rules of Scripture and natural equity, to abide in this defence of ourselves. For whereas we are charged with a crime, and that aggravated as one of the most heinous that men can incur the guilt of in this world, and to justify men in severities against us; being not in the least convinced in our consciences of any accessions thereunto, or of any guilt on the account of it, I suppose the doctor himself will not think it reasonable that we should altogether neglect the protection of our own innocency.

In the method whereinto he hath cast his discourse, he begins with the reinforcement of his charge, against our refraining from total communion with parochial assemblies. If the reader will be pleased to take a review of what is said in the preceding discourse unto this head of our charge in several chapters, he will easily perceive, that either the reasonings of the doctor reach not the cause in hand, or are insufficient to justify his intention, which I must say, though I am unwilling to repeat it, is by all ways and means, to load us with the guilt and disreputation of schism.

That which I first meet withal directly unto this purpose is, part ii. p. 157. The forbearance of communion with the church of England in its parochial assemblies (that is, in the way and manner before described) he opposeth with two

arguments. The first respects those who allow occasional communion with parochial churches, but will not comply with them in that which is constant and absolute. For he says, 'If the first be lawful, the latter is necessary, from the commands we have to preserve the peace and unity of the church. And the not doing it,' he says, 'is one of the provoking sins of the nonconformists;' but whether it be a sin or no, is 'sub judice;' that it is provoking unto some is sufficiently evident. I shall not make this any part of my contest. Those who have so expressed their charity, as to give countenance unto this pretended advantage, will easily free themselves from the force of this inference. For it must be remembered, that this constant total communion doth not only include a conscientious observance of all things appointed to be done by the rules or canons in those assemblies, but a renunciation also of all other ways and means of edification by joint communion, as unlawful and evil. And it will be hard to prove that on a concession of the lawfulness of communion in some acts of divine worship, it will be necessary for men to oblige themselves unto total constant communion, with a renunciation and condemnation of all other ways and means of joint edification. It may also be lawful to do a thing with some respects and limitations, at some times, which it may not be lawful to do absolutely and always. It may be necessary from outward circumstances to do that sometimes which is lawful in itself, though not necessary from itself; it can never be necessary to do that which is unlawful. Of the first sort they esteem occasional communion, and the other of the latter.

Some time is spent in taking off an exception unto this inference from the practice of our Saviour, who had occasional communion with the Jews in the temple and synagogues, which he proves to have been constant and perpetual, and not occasional only, and that he prescribed the same practice unto his disciples. But I think this labour might have been spared. For there is nothing more clear and certain, than that our Lord Jesus Christ did join with the Jews in the observance of God's institutions among them, on the one hand; and on the other, that he never joined with them in the observance of their own traditions and pharisaical impositions, but warned all his disciples to avoid them

and refuse them, whose example we desire to follow; for concerning all such observances in the church, he pronounced that sentence, 'Every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.'

But the doctor proceeds unto a second argument, p. 163. to the same purpose, from, as he calls it, the particular force of that text, Phil. iii. 16. 'As far as we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, mind the same things.' This is the text which gave the first occasion unto this whole dispute; the doctor's intention is so indefensible from this place, that I thought however he might persist in the defence of the cause he had undertaken, he would have forborn from seeking countenance unto it from these words of the apostle. But it is fallen out otherwise, and I am here in the first place called unto an account, for the exceptions I put in unto his application of these words of the apostle, in my Vindication of the Nonconformists.

I will spare the reader as much as is possible in the repetition of things formerly spoken, and the transcription of his words or my own, without prejudice unto the cause itself.

After a reflection of some obscurity and intricacy on my discourse, he repeats my sense of the words according unto his apprehension under four heads; about which I shall not contend, seeing whether he hath apprehended my mind aright or no, or expressed the whole of what I declared, belongs not unto the merit of the cause in hand. Nor indeed do I yet know directly, what he judgeth this text doth prove, or what it is that he infers from it, though I know well enough what it is designed to give countenance unto, and what is the application that is made of it. And therefore he issues his whole dispute about it in this inquiry, How far the apostle's rule hath an influence on this case. But whosoever shall come unto a sedate consideration of this text and context, without prejudice, without preconceived opinions, without interest in parties or causes, will judge it to be a matter of art to apply them unto the present controversy, as unto the imposition of an arbitrary rule of walking in churches, on all that are presumed to belong unto them.

But to clear these things, the doctor proposeth three things to be debated.

'1. Whether the apostle speaks of different opinions, or different practices.

'2. Whether the rule he gives be mutual forbearance.

'3. How far the apostle's rule hath an influence into this case.'

The two first of these belong not at all unto the present argument, and the last is but faintly proposed and pursued, though it be the foundation of his whole fabric. The reader, if he will put himself to so much trouble, as to compare my former discourse with what is here offered in answer or opposition unto it, he will easily see that nothing is pleaded, that may abate the force of what was insisted on; for indeed the discourse of these things consists for the most part in diversions from the argument in hand, whereby an appearance is made of various arguings, and the proof of sundry things, which belong not unto the case in hand.

Without any long deductions, artificial insinuations, or diverting reasonings, without wresting the text or context, these things are plain and evident in them:

1. A supposition of differences among believers, in and about opinions and practices, relating unto religion and the worship of God. So is at present between us and those of the church of England by whom we are opposed.

2. In this state, whilst these differences do continue, there is one common rule, according unto which those who so dissent among themselves, are to walk in the things wherein they are agreed. Such is the rule of faith and love, which we all assent unto and are agreed in.

3. This rule cannot consist in a precise determination of the things in difference, with an authoritative prescription of uniformity in opinions and practice, because it is directed unto, upon a supposition of the continuation of those differences between believers.

4. That during the continuation of these differences, or different apprehensions and practices, whilst on all hands they use the means of coming unto the knowledge of the truth in all things, that they should walk in love, mutually forbearing one another, in those things wherein they differed.

Until it be manifested that these things are not the design of the context, and to contain the sense of the words, they are not only useless unto the doctor's design, but opposite

unto it, and destructive of it. But nothing is here attempted unto that purpose.

To draw any argument from these words applicable unto his design, it must be proved,

1. That besides the rule of faith, love, and worship, given by divine institution, and obligatory unto all the disciples of Christ or all churches, in all times and ages, that the apostles gave a rule concerning outward rites, ceremonies, modes of worship, feasts, and fastings, ecclesiastical government, liturgies, and the like, unto which all believers ought to conform, on the penalty of being esteemed schismatics, and dealt withal accordingly. For this only is that wherein we are concerned.

2. That because the apostles made such a rule (which we know not what it is, or what is become of it), that the guides of the church (and that in such a church-state as the apostles knew nothing of) have power to frame such a rule as that described, and to impose the observation of it on all believers, on the penalties before mentioned.

It is manifest that no advantage unto the cause of imposition and uniformity, as it is stated at present, can be taken from these words of the apostle, unless these two things be contained in them. But that either of them are so, our author doth not say, nor go about to prove, in his large discourse on this place. I might therefore forbear any farther examination of it, without the least disadvantage unto our cause. But that I may not seem to wave the consideration of any thing that is pretended material, I shall inquire into the particulars of it.

He proceeds therefore to answer his own queries, which he judged conducing unto his purpose. The first of them is, 'Whether the apostle speaks of different principles or of different practices.' And I find nothing in the discourse ensuing, that hath the least respect unto this inquiry, until towards the close of it, where he grants that different apprehensions are intended, such as were accompanied with different practices; but in order hereunto he gives us a large account of the scope of the place, and the design of the apostle in it. The substance of it is, That the apostle treats concerning Judaical seducers; that the things in difference were the different apprehensions of men about the law, its

ceremonies and worship, with the continuation of them, and the different practices that ensued thereon.

Be it so; what is our or his concernment herein? For it is most certain the apostle designed not the imposition of these things on the churches of the Gentiles, nor did urge them unto a uniformity in them, but declared their liberty from any obligation unto them, and advised them to stand fast in that liberty, whatever others did practise themselves, or endeavour to impose on them. What this conduceth unto his purpose I cannot understand.

But on the occasion of that expression, 'being otherwise minded,' he demands, 'What sense can Dr. Owen here put upon the being otherwise minded; otherwise than what? As many as be perfect be thus minded, to pursue your main end; but if any be otherwise minded; did any think they ought not to mind chiefly their great end? that is incredible. Therefore the apostle must be understood of somewhat about which there were then very different apprehensions; and that it is certain there were, about the law, among Christian churches.'

Neither do I well understand these things, or what is intended in them. For,

1. I never gave occasion to him or any else to think, that I would affix such a sense unto the apostle's words, as if they gave an allowance to men to be otherwise minded, as unto the pursuit of their main end, of living to God in faith and love, with mutual peace among themselves.

2. What then do I intend by being otherwise minded? even the same that he doth, and nothing else, namely, different apprehensions about some things in religion, and particularly those concerning the law and its ceremonies. For,

3. Let it be supposed that the apostle in particular intends dissensions about the law, and the observance of its institutions, yet he doth not determine the case from the especial circumstances of that difference, so adjudging the truth unto one of the parties at variance; but from a general rule how the disciples of Christ ought to deport themselves towards one another, during the continuation of such differences. But,

4. The truth is, the apostle hath dismissed the case proposed in the beginning of the chapter; ver. 1—3, &c.

and upon the occasion of his expression of his own voluntary relinquishment and renunciation of all the privileges which the Jews boasted in, and of his attainments thereon in the mysteries of the gospel, ver. 12—14. he gives a general direction for the walking of all Christians, in the several degrees and measures of their attainments in the same kind. And herein he supposeth two things. (1.) That there were things, all the fundamental doctrines of the gospel concerning the person, offices, and grace of Christ, which they had all in common attained unto. 'Whereunto we have already attained;' we, all of us in general. (2.) That in some things there were different apprehensions and practices amongst them, which hindered not their agreement in what they had attained; 'if any one be otherwise minded;' one than another. We that are perfect and those which are weak, let us walk by the same rule.

Wherefore, although I cannot discern how any thing in this discourse hath the least influence into the case in hand, yet to give a little more light unto the context, and to evidence its unserviceableness unto the doctor's intention, I shall give a brief account of the Judaical teachers of those days.

The Jews were by this time distributed into three sorts:

1. Such as being obdurate in their unbelief and rejection of the person of Christ, opposed, persecuted, and blasphemed the gospel in all places. Thus was it with the generality of the nation. And the teachers of this sort advanced the excellency, necessity, and usefulness of the law, in contradiction unto Christ and the gospel. These the apostle describes, 1 Thess. ii. 13—15. The Jews, 'who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us, and they please not God, and are contrary unto all men, forbidding us to speak unto the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway, for the wrath is come upon them unto the uttermost.'

2. Such as professing faith in Christ Jesus and obedience unto the gospel, yet were of the mind that the whole law of Moses, was not only to be continued and observed among the Jews, but also that it was to be imposed on the Gentiles who were converted unto the faith. They thought the gospel did not erect a new church-state with a new kind

of worship, but only was a peculiar way of proselyting men into Judaism; against which the apostle disputes in his Epistle unto the Hebrews, especially in the seventh and eighth chapters. The teachers of this sort greatly troubled the churches, even after the declaration of the mind of the Holy Ghost in these things by the apostles, Acts xv. Those who continued obstinate in this persuasion, became afterward to be Ebionites and Nazarenes, as they were called, wholly forsaking the Christian church of the Gentiles. These were generally of the sect of the Pharisees, and seem to be the least sort of the three; for,

3. There were others, who acquiescing in the liberty of the Gentiles, declared by the apostles, Acts xv. yet judged themselves, and all other circumcised Jews, obliged unto the observation of the law and its institutions. These legal observances were of two sorts:

(1.) Such as were confined and limited unto the temple, and unto the land of Canaan; and,

(2.) Such as might be observed any where among the nations; they acted accordingly. Those who lived at Jerusalem adhered unto the temple worship; the whole church there did so. Their judgment in these things is declared, Acts xxi. 20, 21. 'Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of the Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law; and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles, to forsake Moses, saying, That they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.' They were not at all offended with Paul, that he did not impose the law on the Gentiles, ver. 25. but only that (as they had been informed) he taught the Jews to forsake the law, and to reject all the institutions of it. This they thought unlawful for them. And this they spoke principally with respect unto the temple service, as appears by the advice given unto Paul on this occasion, ver. 23, 24. Those who lived amongst the Gentiles, knew that there was no obligation on them, unto the sacrifices and especial duties of the temple; but continued only in the observance of such rites and institutions about meats, washings, days, new-moons, sabbaths, and the like, which the Gentiles were freed from.

Hence there were two sorts of churches in those days

(if not three) in separation, more or less, from the apostate church of the unbelieving Jews, which yet was not finally taken away.

1. The church of Jerusalem, and those churches of Judea which were of the same mind and communion with them. These continued in the observance of all the law, and of the services of the temple, being allowed them by the apostles.

2. Those of the Jews who lived in the nations, and observed all the rites of the law, which were not confined unto the land of Canaan. And,

3. The churches of the Gentiles which observed none of these things, forbearing only their liberty in one or two instances, not to give the other offence. Some differences and disputes happened sometimes about these things and the practice of them, whereon Peter himself fell into a mistake; Gal. ii. 14. And there seems to have been great disputes about them at Rome; chap. xiv. Yea, it is judged that according unto their different apprehensions of these things, there were two churches at Rome; one of the circumcision, the other of the Gentiles, walking in distinct communion each by themselves. However, the different rule of this kind that was between the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch is sufficiently declared, Acts xv. the one church continuing zealous of the law, and the other rejoiced for the consolation of being delivered from it; ver 31. Yet was there no schism between these churches, but a constant communion in faith and love. Such differences in opinions and practices were not yet formed into an interest, obliging men to condemn them as schismatics, who differ from them. For, not to speak of what orders and rules for decency, particular churches may make by common consent among themselves, to make the observation of arbitrary institutions, not prescribed in the Scripture, upon many churches, to be the rule of communion in them and between them, which whosoever observe not, are to be esteemed guilty of schism, which Victor, bishop of Rome, first attempted, is contrary to the rules of the Scripture, to the principles of Christian faith, love, and liberty, to the example of the apostles, hath no countenance given unto it in the primitive churches, and will certainly make our differences endless.

I judge that in the beginning of the chapter the apostle intends those of the first sort, and that as well because he calls them 'dogs' and the 'concision,' which answers unto the account he gives of them, 1 Thess. ii. 14, 15. as also because he speaks of them as those who advanced the pretended privileges of Judaism, absolutely against Christ, the gospel, and the righteousness of God revealed therein. Hereon, in opposition unto them, he declares that they had nothing to boast of, but what he himself had a right unto as well as they, and which he had voluntarily relinquished and renounced for Christ and the gospel, wherein he testifies what he had attained. If any one do judge, that he intend those of the second sort, I will not contend about it, because of the severity of expression which he useth concerning them; Gal. v. 12. But discharging the consideration of them, the direction in this place concerns those of the third sort only, answering unto that which was prescribed and followed by the apostles in all places, namely, that there should be mutual forbearance, in some difference of practice between them and the Gentile believers.

His second inquiry, p. 168. is, 'Whether the rule which the apostle lays down, be only a rule of mutual forbearance.' I do not find that I said any where that it was only a rule of mutual forbearance, but that the words of the apostle do enjoin a mutual forbearance among those who are differently minded; p. 26. And I must here say, which I desire to do without offence, that there is no need of any farther answer unto that part of the doctor's discourse, but a transcription of that which he pretends to oppose; for what is spoken unto that end, consists in a perpetual diversion from the argument in hand.

I did not before precisely determine, what was the rule which the apostle doth intend; only proved sufficiently, that it was not such a rule as is pleaded for by the doctor. But the meaning of the phrase and expression is plain enough; τῷ αὐτῷ στοιχεῖν κανόνι; it is directly used once more by the apostle, Gal. vi. 16. ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχήσουσιν; 'as many as walk according to this rule;' and what rule is that? namely, what as unto the substance of it he lays down in the words foregoing, ver. 14, 15. 'God forbid that I should glory save in

the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature; and as many as walk according unto this rule,' that is, the rule of faith in Christ alone for justification and sanctification, without trusting unto, or resting on, any of those things which were in difference among them. The places in scope, design, and manner of expression, are parallel. For this is plainly that which he pleads for in this context; namely, that justification and sanctification are to be obtained alone through Christ, and faith in him by the gospel, without the least aid and assistance from the things that were in difference among them. Wherefore, not farther to contend in so plain a matter, the rule here intended by the apostle, is no book of canons, but the analogy of faith, or the rule of faith in Christ as declared in the gospel, in opposition unto all other ways and means of justification, sanctification, and salvation, which we ought to walk in a compliance withal, and that with love and forbearance towards them that in things not corruptive or destructive of this rule, do differ from us.

But, saith our author, 'The sense, according to Dr. Owen, is this; that those who are agreed in the substantials of religion, should go on and do their duty, without regarding lesser differences.' Abate that expression of, 'without regarding lesser differences,' which is not mine, and supply in the room of it, 'mutually forbearing each other in lesser differences;' and be it so that it is my sense; at first view it looks as like the sense of the apostle as any man need desire. But, saith the doctor, 'This sense is uncertain, because it sets no bounds to differences, and supposeth the continuance of such differences among them, which he designed to prevent, by persuading them so often in this epistle to be of one mind. Besides, the differences then on foot were none of the smaller differences of opinions, but that which they differed about, was urged on the one hand as necessary to salvation, and opposed on the other as pernicious and destructive unto it.' And again, p. 169. 'Let Dr. Owen name any other smaller differences of opinions which might be an occasion of the apostle's giving such a rule of mutual forbearance.'

I answer briefly, 1. The sense is very certain, because it gives the due bounds unto the differences supposed; namely, such as concern not the substantials of religion.

2. It doth suppose the continuance of these differences, because the apostle doth suppose the same; 'if any one be yet otherwise minded;' which hinders no kind of endeavours to compose or remove them.

3. The differences intended were not those between them who imposed the observation of the law on the Gentiles as necessary unto salvation, and those by whom they were opposed; for the apostle gives no such rules as this in that case.

4. I do expressly assign those lesser differences which the direction here is applicable unto, namely, those between the blind sort of Jews mentioned before, and the Gentile believers; which the apostle states and applies the same rule unto, Rom. xiv. What remains in answer unto this second inquiry, doth proceed on mistaken suppositions, and concerns not the case under consideration.

Page 170. he proceeds unto his last inquiry, which indeed is alone pertinent unto his purpose; namely, 'How this rule hath an influence on our case.'

What this rule is, concerning which this inquiry is made, he doth not declare. Either the precise signification of the rule in this place, or the direction given with respect unto that rule, may be intended; that is, the general rule of our walking in our profession of the gospel, or the especial rule given by the apostle with respect thereunto, in the case under consideration, may be so intended. If by the rule in the first sense, he understands a rule, canon, or command, establishing a church-state, with rites and modes of worship, with ceremonies, orders, and government, nowhere appointed in the Scripture or of divine revelation, it is openly evident that there was no such rule then, that no such is here intended; but that only whereunto the grace of the gospel in mercy and peace is annexed, as Gal. vi. 16. which is not such a rule. If he intended by it, a direction, that where there are different apprehensions in matters of less importance, not breaking in on the analogy of faith, accompanied with different practices, so far as they are necessary from those different apprehensions, the major part of those

among whom the differences are, should compel the minor, to forbear their practice according unto their apprehensions, and comply with them in all things, on all sorts of penalties, if they refuse so to do, it will be hard to find such a direction in these words. Yet this must be the rule, and this the direction that can give any countenance unto the doctor's cause. But if by this rule, the analogy of faith, as before described, be intended, and the direction be to walk according to it, with mutual forbearance and love, as unto things of lesser moment, then this rule hath little advantageous influence into it.

But then saith the doctor, 'So far as men agree they are bound to join together, as to opinion or communion.' I grant it (though it be not proved from this place) where such a communion is required of them regularly, and in a way of duty. And,

(2.) Saith he, 'That the best Christians are bound to unite with others, though of lower attainments, and to keep within the same rule.' No doubt; howbeit the apostle speaks of no such things in this place, but only that we should all walk according unto the same rule, in what we have all attained. Yea, but,

(3.) 'This rule takes in all such orders, which are lawful and judged necessary to hold the members of a Christian society together.' What rule doth this? Who shall appoint the orders intended? Who shall judge of their necessity? Are they of the institution of Christ or his apostles? Are they determined to be necessary in the Scripture, the rule of faith? If so, we are agreed; but if by these orders he intends such as men do or may at any time, under pretence of church authority, invent and impose as necessary, making alterations in the original state and rule of the church, as also in its worship and discipline, it will be strange to me, if he can find them out, either in the rule here mentioned, or the direction given with reference unto it; seeing such a practice seems to be plainly condemned in the words themselves. And it is known that this pretended power of rule or canon making for the unity of the church, was that which at length ruined all churches in their state, order, and worship; if such a ruin be acknowledged to have befallen them in the Roman apostacy.

He therefore objects out of my discourse, p. 171. 'Let the apostle's rule be produced with any probability of proof to be his, and we are all ready to subscribe and conform unto it.' To which he replies, 'This is the apostle's rule to go as far as they can, and if they can go no farther, to sit down quietly and wait for farther instruction, and not to break the peace of the church, upon present dissatisfaction, nor to gather new churches out of others, upon supposition of higher attainments.'

Ans. 1. Upon a supposition that those who make and impose these new unscriptural orders, are the church, and that as the church they have authority so to make and impose them; if this be not the rule of the apostle, I believe some men judge it ought so to have been. But,

2. The apostle's rule is not, that we should go as far as we can, as though there were any thing of dispute and difficulty in the matter; but that so far as we have attained we should walk according to the same rule.

3. He doth not intimate any thing about breaking the peace of the church, but only what would do so, by an imposition on one another, in differences of lesser moment, whilst the general rule of faith and love is attended unto.

4. To be quiet and wait for farther instruction, is the direction given unto both parties, whilst the differences did continue between them; and that in opposition unto mutual impositions.

5. A church that is really so, or so esteemed, may break the peace with its own members, and others, as well as they with it; and where the fault is, must be determined by the causes of what is done.

6. For what is added about gathering of churches, it shall be considered in its proper place. But as unto the application of these things unto the present case, there lies in the bottom of them such an unproved presumption of their being the church, that is, according unto divine institution (for in their being so in any other sense we are not concerned) of their church-power and authority, by whom such orders and rules are made as we can by no means admit of.

I can more warrantably give this as the apostle's rule, than that of our author; 'What you have attained unto in the knowledge of the doctrine and mysteries of the gospel,

walk together in holy communion of faith and love; but take heed that you multiply not new causes of divisions and differences by inventing and imposing new orders in divine worship, or the rule of the church, casting them out, who agree with you in all things of divine revelation and institution.'

He adds from my words, 'If the rule reach our case, it must be such as requires things to be observed, as were never divinely appointed, as national churches, ceremonies, and modes of worship;' to which he replies, 'And so this rule doth in order unto peace, require the observation of such things, which although they be not particularly commanded of God, yet are enjoined by lawful authority, provided that they be not unlawful in themselves, nor repugnant unto the word of God.'

Ans. 1. Let the reader, if he please, consult the place whence these words are taken in my discourse, and he will find this evasion obviated.

2. What is intended by this rule? is it the rule given by the apostle? Who that reads the words can possibly pretend unto any such conception of their meaning? If he understand a rule of his own, I know not what it may or may not include.

3. I deny, and shall for ever deny, that the rule here intended by the apostle doth give the least countenance unto the invention and imposition of things not divinely instituted, not prescribed, not commanded in the word, on the pretence that those who so invent and impose them, judge them lawful, and that they have authority so to do.

He objects again unto himself out of my discourse, that 'The apostles never gave any such rules themselves about outward modes of worship, with ceremonies, feasts, fasts, liturgies,' &c. Whereunto he replies, 'What then?' I say then,

1. It had been happy for Christians and Christian religion, if those who pretended to be their successors, had followed their example, and made no such rules at all; that they would not have thought themselves wiser than they, or more careful for the good of the church, or better acquainted with the mind of Christ in these things than they were. For that multiplication of rules, laws, canons, about the things

mentioned, and others of an alike nature, which the apostles never gave any example of, or encouragement unto, which afterward ensued, hath been a principal means of altering the state of the church from its original institution, of corrupting its worship, administering occasion unto scandal and endless strifes.

2. If the apostles gave no such rules themselves, it may be concluded safely, that it was because in their judgment no such rule was to be given. Other reason hereof cannot be assigned; for if it might have been done, according to the mind of Christ, and by virtue of the commission which they had from him, innumerable evils might have been prevented by the doing it. They foresaw what differences would arise in the church, what divisions the darkness and corrupt lusts of men would cast them into, about such things as these, and probably knew much whereunto the mystery of iniquity tended; yet would they not appoint any arbitrary rules about things not ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ, which might have given some bounds unto the inclinations of men, in making and multiplying rules of their own, unto the ruin of the church.

3. Then, I say, we beg the pardon of all who concern themselves herein, that we scruple the complying with such rules, in religion and the worship of God, as the apostles thought not meet to appoint or ordain.

But he adds, 'It is sufficient that they gave this general rule, that all lawful things are to be done for the church's peace.'

Ans. What is to be done for the church's peace we shall afterward consider. 'To be done,' is intended of acts of religion in the worship of God. I say, then, the apostles never gave any such rule as that pretended. The rule they gave was, that all things which Christ hath commanded, were to be done and observed, and for the doing of any thing else, they gave no rule. Especially they gave not such a large rule as this, that might serve the turn and interest of the worst of men, in imposing on the church, whatever they esteemed lawful, as (not by virtue of any rule of the apostles, but in an open rejection of all they gave) it afterward fell out in the church. This is a rule, which would do the work to the purpose of all that have the reputation of governors

in the church, be it the pope, or who it will. For they are themselves the sole judges of what is lawful; the people, as it is pretended, understand nothing of these things. Whatever therefore they have a mind to introduce into the worship of God, and to impose on the practice of men therein, is to be done by virtue of this apostolical rule, for the church's peace, provided they judge it lawful; and surely no pope was ever yet so stark mad, as to impose things in religion, which he himself judged unlawful. Besides, things may be lawful in themselves, that is, morally, which yet it is not lawful to introduce into the worship of God, because not expedient, nor for edification; yea, things may be lawful to be done sometimes, on some occasions, in the worship of God, which yet it would be unlawful to impose by virtue of a general binding rule for all times and seasons. Instances may be multiplied in each kind. Therefore I say the apostles never gave this rule; they opened no such door unto arbitrary imposition; they laid no such yoke on the necks of the disciples, which might prove heavier, and did so, than that of the Jewish ceremonies which they had taken away; namely, that they were to do and observe all that should by their rulers be imposed on them as lawful in their judgment. This sovereignty over their consciences was reserved by the apostles unto the authority of Christ alone, and their obedience was required by them, only unto his commands. This is that which I see some would be at. To presume themselves to be the church, at least the only rulers and governors of it; to assume to themselves alone the judgment of what is lawful, and what is unlawful to be observed in the worship of God; to avow a power to impose what they please on all churches, pretended to be under their command, so that they judge it lawful, be it never so useless or trifling, if it hath no other end but to be an instance of their authority, and then assert that all Christian people must without farther examination submit quietly unto this state of things, and comply with it, unless they will be esteemed damned schismatics. But it is too late to advance such principles a second time.

He adds from my paper, or as my sense, 'The apostles gave rules inconsistent with any determining rule, viz. of mutual forbearance;' Rom. xiv. 'But then,' saith he, 'the

meaning must be, that whatever differences happen among Christians, there must be no determination either way. But this is directly contrary to the decree of the apostles at Jerusalem, upon the difference that happened in the Christian churches.' But they are not my words which he reports. I said not, that the apostles gave rules inconsistent with any determining rule; but with such a rule, and the imposition of the things contained in it, on the practice of men in things not determined (that is, whilst differences about them do continue) as he contends for. And,

(1.) Notwithstanding this rule of forbearance given by the apostle expressly, Rom. xiv. yet as unto the right and truth in the things wherein men are at difference, every private believer is to determine of them so far as he is able in his own mind, every one is to be fully persuaded in his own mind in such things, so far as his own practice is concerned.

(2.) The church wherein such differences do fall out, may doctrinally determine of the truth in them, as it is the ground and pillar of truth; supposing them to be of such weight, as that the edification of the church is concerned in them. For otherwise there is no need of any such determination, but every one may be left unto his own liberty. There are differences at this day in the church of England, in doctrine and practice, some of them, in my judgment of more importance than those between the same church and us; yet it doth not think it necessary to make any determination of them, no not doctrinally.

(3.) If the church wherein such differences fall out be not able in and of itself to make a doctrinal determination of such differences, they may and ought to crave the counsel and advice of other churches, with whom they walk in communion in faith and love. And so it was in the case whereof an account is given us, Acts xv. The determination or decree there made concerning the necessary observance of the Jewish rites by the Gentiles converted unto the faith, by the apostles, elders, and brethren, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost as his mind was revealed in the Scripture, gives not the least countenance unto the making and imposing such a rule on all churches and their members, as is contended for.

For, (1.) It was only a doctrinal determination, without imposition on the practice of any.

(2.) It was a determination against impositions directly. And whereas it is said, that it was a determination contrary to the judgment of the imposers, which shews, that the rule of forbearance where conscience is alleged both ways, is no standing rule; I grant that it was contrary to the judgment of the imposers, but imposed nothing on them, nor was their practice concerned in that erroneous judgment. They were not required to do any thing contrary to their own judgment; and the not doing whereof did reflect on their own consciences. Wherefore, the whole rule given by the apostle, and the whole determination made, is, that no impositions be made on the consciences or practice of the disciples of Christ, in things relating to his worship, but what were necessary by virtue of divine institution. They added hereunto, that the Gentiles enjoying this liberty, ought to use it without offence; and were at liberty by virtue of it, to forbear such things, as wherein they had, or thought they had, a natural liberty, in case they gave offence by the use of them. And the apostles who knew the state of things in the minds of the Jews, and all other circumstances, give an instance in the things which at that season were to be so forborn. And whereas this determination was not absolute and obligatory on the whole case unto all churches, namely, whether the Mosaical law were to be observed among Christians, but some churches were left unto their own judgment and practice, who esteemed it to be still in force, as the churches of the Jews, and others left unto their own liberty and practice also, who judged it not to oblige them, both sides or parties being bound to continue communion among them in faith and love, there is herein a perpetual establishment of the rule of mutual forbearance in such cases; nothing being condemned but impositions on one another; nothing commended but an abstinence from the use of liberty in the case of scandal or offence. I had therefore reason to say, that the false apostles were the only imposers, that is, of things not necessary by virtue of any divine institution. And if the author insinuate, that the true apostles were such imposers also, because of the determination they made of this difference, he will fail in his

proof of it. It is true they imposed on, or charged the consciences of men with the observance of all the institutions and commands of Christ; but of other things none at all.

The last things which he endeavours an answer unto on this occasion lies in these words. 'The Jewish Christians were left unto their own liberty, provided they did not impose on others; and the dissenters at this day desire no more than the Gentile church did, viz. not to be imposed on to observe those things which they are not satisfied it is the mind of Christ should be imposed on them.' So is my sense, in the places referred unto, reported. Nor shall I contend about it, so as that the last clause be changed; for my words are not, 'they are not satisfied it is the mind of Christ that they should be imposed on them;' but 'they were not satisfied it is the mind of Christ they should observe.' This respects the things themselves, the other only their imposition. And one reason against the imposition opposed is, that the things themselves imposed, are such as the Lord Christ would not have us observe; because not appointed by himself.

But hereunto he answers two things.

1. 'That it was agreed by all the governors of the Christian church, that the Jewish Christians should be left unto their own liberty, out of respect unto the law of Moses, and out of regard unto the peace of the Christian church, which otherwise might have been extremely hazarded.' But,

(1.) The governors of the Christian church which made the determination insisted on, were the apostles themselves.

(2.) There was no such determination made, that the Jews should be left unto their own liberty in this matter; but there was only a connivance at their inclination to bear their old yoke for a season; the determination was only on the other hand, that no imposition of it should be made on the Gentiles.

(3.) The determination itself was no act of church government or power, but a doctrinal declaration of the mind of the Holy Ghost.

(4.) It is well that church governors once judged that impositions in things not necessary were to be forborn for the sake of the peace of the church; others, I hope, may in due time be of the same mind.

2. He says, 'The false apostles imposing on the Gentile Christians had two circumstances in it, which extremely alter their case from that of our dissenters.' For,

(1.) 'They were none of their lawful governors, but went about as seducers, drawing away the disciples of the apostles from them.' It seems then,

(1.) That those who are lawful governors, or pretend themselves so to be, may impose what they please without control, as they did in the papacy, and the councils of it. But,

(2.) Their imposition was merely doctrinal, wherein there was no pretence of any act of government or governing power; which made it less grievous, than that which the dissenters have suffered under. Were things no otherwise imposed on us, we should bear them more easily.

(2.) Saith he, 'They imposed the Jewish rites as necessary to salvation, and not merely as indifferent things;' and the truth is, so long as they judged them so to be, they are more to be excused in their doctrinal impositions of them, than others are, who by an act of government, fortified with I know not how many penalties, do impose things which themselves esteem indifferent; and those on whom they are imposed, do judge to be unlawful.

Whereas he adds, 'That he hath considered all things that are material in my discourse which seem to take off the force of the argument drawn from this text;' I am not of his mind, nor I believe will any indifferent person be so, who shall compare what I wrote therein, with his exceptions against it; though I acknowledge it is no easy thing to discover wherein the force of the pretended argument doth lie. That we must walk according unto the same rule in what we have attained; that wherein we differ, we must wait on God for teaching and instruction; that the apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem, determined from the Scriptures, or the mind of the Holy Ghost therein, that the Jewish ceremonies should not be imposed on the Gentile churches and believers; and that thereon those churches continued in communion with each other, who did, and did not observe those ceremonies, are the only principles which in truth the doctor hath to proceed upon. To infer from these principles and propositions, that there is a national church

of divine institution, for what is not so, hath no church-power properly so called; the nature of its power, being determined by the authority of its institution or erection. That this church hath power in its governors and rulers to invent new orders, ceremonies, and rites of worship, new canons for the observation of sundry things in the rule of the church and worship of God, which have no spring nor cause but their own invention and prescription, and is authorized to impose the observation of them on all particular churches and believers who never gave their consent unto their invention or prescription; and hereon to declare them all to be wicked schismatics, who yield not full obedience unto them in these things, it requires a great deal of art and skill, in the managers of the argument.

SECT. II.

PART ii. sect. 21. p. 176. our author proceeds to renew his charge of schism or sinful separation against those, 'who though they agree with us,' saith he, 'in the substantials of religion, yet deny any communion with our church to be lawful.' But apprehending that the state of the question here insinuated will not be admitted, and that it would be difficult to find them out, who deny any communion with the church of England to be lawful; he adds, that he doth not speak of 'any improper acts of communion, which Dr. Owen calls communion in faith and love; which they allow to the church of England.' But why the acts hereof are called 'improper acts of communion,' I know not. Add unto faith and love, the administration of the same sacraments, with common advice in things of common concernment, and it is all the communion that the true churches of Christ have among themselves in the whole world. Yea, this church communion is such, as that,

1. Where it is not, there is no evangelical communion at all. Whatever acts of worship or church-order men may agree in the practice of, if the foundation of that agreement be not laid in a joint communion in faith and love, they are neither accepted with God, nor profitable unto the souls of men. For,

2. These are the things, namely, faith and love, which enliven all joint duties of church-order and worship, are the life and soul of it; and how they should be only improperly that, which they alone make other things to be properly, I cannot understand.

3. Where there is no defect in these things, namely, in faith and love, the charge of schism on dissenting in things of lesser moment, is altogether unreasonable. It is to be desired, that an overweening of our differences, make us not overlook the things wherein we are agreed. This is one of the greatest evils that attend this controversy. Men are forced by their interest, to lay more weight on a few outward rites and ceremonies, which the world and the church might well have spared, had they not come into the minds of some men, none know how, than upon the most important graces and duties of the gospel. Hence communion in faith and love, is scarce esteemed worth taking up in the streets, in comparison of uniformity in rites and ceremonies. Let men be as void of, and remote from, true gospel faith and love as is imaginable; yet if they comply quietly with, and have a little zeal for, those outward things, they are to be approved of, as very orderly members of the church. And whatever evidences on the other hand, any can or do give of their communion in faith and love, with all that are of that communion, yet if they cannot in conscience comply in the observance of those outward things mentioned, they are to be judged schismatics, and breakers of the church's unity; whereas no part of the church's unity doth or ever did consist in them.

In his procedure hereon, our author seems to embrace occasions of contending, seeking for advantages therein, in things not belonging unto the merit of the cause, which I thought was beneath him. From my concession, that some at least of our parochial churches are true churches; he asks, 'In what sense? Are they churches rightly constituted, with whom they may join in communion as members?' I think it is somewhat too late now, after all this dispute about the reasons of refraining from their communion, and his severe charges of schism upon us for our so doing, to make this inquiry. Wherefore he answers himself, 'No, but his meaning is,' saith he, 'that they are not guilty of any such

heinous errors in doctrine, or idolatrous practice in worship, as should utterly deprive them of the being and nature of churches,' which I suppose are my words. But then comes in the advantage; 'Doth,' saith he, 'this kindness belong only unto some of our parochial churches? I had thought that every parochial church was true or false according unto its frame and constitution, which among us, supposeth the owning the doctrine and worship established in the church of England.' I answer briefly, It is true, every church is true or false according unto its original frame and constitution. This frame and constitution of churches, if it proceed from, and depend upon, the institution of Christ, it is true and approvable. If it depend only on a national establishment of doctrine and worship, I know not well what to say unto it. But let any of these parochial churches be so constituted, as to answer the legal establishment in the land, yet if the generality of their members are openly wicked in their lives, and they have no lawful or sufficient ministry, we cannot acknowledge them for true churches. Some other things of the like nature do ensue, but I shall not insist on them.

He gathers up in the next place, the titles of the causes alleged, for our refraining communion with those parochial assemblies, which he calls our separation from them. And hereon he inquires, 'whether these reasons be a ground for a separation from a church, wherein it is confessed there are no heinous errors in doctrine, or idolatrous practice in worship;' that is, as he before cited my words, 'as should utterly deprive them of the being and nature of churches.' And if they be not, then, saith he, 'such a separation may be a formal schism, because they set up other churches of their own.'

The rule before laid down, that all things lawful are to be done for the church's peace, taking in the supposition on which it proceeds, is as sufficient to establish church tyranny, as any principle made use of by the church of Rome, notwithstanding its plausible appearance. And that here insinuated of the unlawfulness of separation from any church in the world (for that which hath pernicious errors in doctrine, and idolatry in worship, destroying its being, is no church at all), is as good security unto churches, in an obstinate refusal of reformation, when the souls of the people are

ruined amongst them for the want of it, as they need desire. And I confess I suspect such principles as are evidently suited unto the security of the corrupt interests of any sort of men.

I say, therefore, 1. That though a church, or that which pretends itself on any grounds so to be, do not profess any heinous error in doctrine, nor be guilty of idolatrous practice in worship, destroying its nature and being, yet there may be sufficient reasons to refrain from its communion in church-order and worship, and to join in or with other churches for edification. That is, that where such a church is not capable of reformation, or is obstinate in a resolution not to reform itself, under the utmost necessity thereof; it is lawful for all or any of its members to reform themselves, according to the mind of Christ, and commands of the gospel.

2. That where men are no otherwise members of any church, but by an inevitable necessity, and outward penal laws, preventing their own choice, and any act of obedience unto Christ in their joining with such churches, the case is different from theirs, whose relation unto any church is founded in their own voluntary choice, as submitting themselves unto the laws, institution, and rule of Christ in that church; which we shall make use of afterward.

3. The doctor might have done well to have stated the true nature of schism, and the formal reason of it, before he had charged a formal schism, on a supposition of some outward acts only.

4. What is our judgment concerning parochial assemblies, how far we separate from them or refrain communion with them, what are the reasons whereon we do so, hath been now fully declared, and thereunto we must appeal on all occasions; for we cannot acquiesce in what is unduly imposed on us, either as unto principles or practice.

'To shew,' as he saith, 'the insufficiency of our cause of separation, he will take this way, namely, to shew the great absurdities that follow on the allowance of them;' and adds,

'These five especially I shall insist upon;

'1. That it weakens the cause of reformation.

'2. That it hinders all union between the Protestant churches.

'3. That it justifies the ancient schisms, which have been always condemned by the Christian church.

'4. That it makes separation endless.

'5. That it is contrary to the obligation that lies on all Christians to preserve the peace and unity of the church.'

Now as I shall consider what he offers on these several heads, and his application of it unto the case in hand, so I shall confirm the reasons already given of our separation (if it must be so called) from parochial assemblies, with these five considerations:

1. That they strengthen the cause of reformation.

2. That they open a way to union between all Protestant churches.

3. That they give the just grounds of condemning the ancient schisms that ever any Christian church did justly condemn.

4. That they give due bounds unto separation.

5. That they absolutely comply with all the commands of the Scripture for the preservation of the peace and unity of the church.

I shall begin with the consideration of the absurdities, charged by him on our principles and practice.

The first of them is, 'That it weakens the cause of the reformation.' This he proves by long quotations out of some French divines. We are not to expect that they should speak unto our cause, or make any determination in it, seeing to the principal of them it was unknown. 'But they say that which is contrary unto our principles.' So they may do, and yet this not weaken the cause of the reformation. For it is known that they say somewhat also that is contrary to the principles of our episcopal brethren, for which one of them is sufficiently reviled; but yet the cause of reformation is not weakened thereby.

The first testimony produced is that of Calvin; a large discourse he hath, Institut. lib. 4. cap. 1. against causeless separations from a true church; and by whom are they not condemned? No determination of the case in hand can be thence derived; nor are the grounds of our refraining communion with parochial assemblies, the same with those which he condemns as insufficient for a total separation; nor is the separation he opposed in those days, which was abso-

lute and total, with a condemnation of the churches from which it was made, of the same nature with that wherewith we are charged, at least not with what we own and allow. He gives the notes of a true church to be, the pure preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments according unto Christ's institution. Where these are, he allows a true church to be, not only without diocesan episcopacy, but in a form and under a rule opposite unto it, and inconsistent with it. And if he did at all speak to our case, as he doth not, nor unto any of the grounds of it, why should we be pressed with his authority on the one hand, more than others from whom he differed also on the other? Besides, there is a great deal more belongs unto the pure preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments according unto Christ's institution, than some seem to apprehend. They may, they ought to be so explained, as that from the consideration of them, we may justify our whole cause. Both these may be wanting in a church, which is not guilty of such heinous errors in doctrine, or idolatry in worship, as should overthrow its being. And their want may be a just cause of refraining communion from a church, which yet we are not obliged to condemn as none at all.

Calvin expresseth his judgment, N. 12. 'I would not give countenance unto errors, no not to the least; so as to cherish them by flattery or connivance. But though I say, that the church is not to be forsaken for trifling differences, wherein the doctrine (of the gospel) is retained safe and sound, wherein the integrity of godliness doth abide, and the use of the sacraments appointed of the Lord is preserved;' and we say the same.

And this very Calvin, who doth so severely condemn separation from a true church as by him stated, did himself quietly and peaceably withdraw and depart from the church of Geneva, when they refused to admit that discipline which he esteemed to be according to the mind of Christ. It is certain, therefore, that by the separation which he condemns, he doth not intend the peaceable relinquishment of the communion of any church, as unto a constant participation of all ordinances in it, for want of due means of edification, much less that which hath so many other causes concurring therewith.

For the other learned men whom he quotes unto the same purpose, I see not any thing that gives the least countenance unto his assertion, that our principles weaken the cause of the reformation. It is true they plead other causes of separation from the church of Rome, than those insisted on by us, with respect unto the church of England; and indeed they had been otherwise much to blame, having so many things as thay had to plead of greater importance. Did we say that the reasons which we plead, are all that can be pleaded to justify the separation of the reformed churches from the church of Rome, it would weaken the cause of reformation. For we should then deny that idolatry and fundamental errors in faith, were any cause or ground of that separation. However we know that the imposition of them on the faith and practice of all Christians, is more pleaded in justification of a separation from them, than the things themselves. But allowing those greater reasons to be pleaded against the Roman communion as we do, it doth not in the least follow that our reasons for refraining communion with parochial assemblies, doth weaken the cause of the reformation.

However, let me not be misinterpreted as unto that expression of destroying our faith, which the communion required with the church of England, as unto all the important articles of it, doth not do, and I can subscribe unto the words of Daille, as quoted by our author out of his apology: 'If,' saith he, 'the church of Rome hath not required any thing of us, which destroys our faith, offends our consciences, and overthrows the service which we believe due to God; if the differences have been small, and such as we might safely have yielded unto; then he will grant their separation was rash and unjust, and they guilty of the schism.'

He closeth his transcription of the words of sundry learned men, who have justified the separation of the reformed churches from the church of Rome, wherein we are not in the least concerned with an inquiry, 'What triumph would the church of Rome make over us, had we no other reasons to justify our separation from them, but only those which (as is pretended) we plead in our cause?' I say, whereas we do plead, confirm, and justify all the reasons and causes pleaded for the separation of the reformed churches from

them, not opposing, not weakening any of them, by any principle or practice of ours, but farther press the force of the same reasonings and causes in all instances whereunto they will extend, I see neither what cause the Papists have of triumph, nor any thing that weakens the cause of the reformation. He adds farther, 'How should we be hissed and laughed at all over the Christian world, if we had nothing to allege for our separation from the Roman church, but such things as these?' I answer, that as the case stands, if we did allege no other reasons but those which we insist on for our refraining communion with our own parochial assemblies, we should deserve to be derided, for relinquishing the plea of those other important reasons which the heresies and idolatries and tyranny of that church do render just and equal. But if we had no other causes of separation from the church of Rome, but what we have for our separation from our parochial assemblies at home, as weak as our allegations are pretended to be, we should not be afraid to defend them against all the Papists in the world; and let the world act like itself in hissing.

Whereas therefore the cause of reformation is not in any thing weakened by our principles, no argument, no reason solidly pleaded to justify the separation from the church of Rome being deserted by us, neither testimony, proof, nor evidence being produced to evince that it is weakened by us, I shall in the second place, as was before proposed, prove that the whole cause of the Protestants' separation from the church of Rome, is strengthened and confirmed by us.

There were some general principles on which the Protestants proceeded in their separation from the church of Rome, and which they constantly pleaded in justification thereof.

1. The first was, that the Scripture, the word of God, is a perfect rule of faith and religious worship; so as that nothing ought to be admitted which is repugnant unto it in its general rule or especial prohibitions, nothing imposed that is not prescribed therein, but that every one is at liberty to refuse and reject any thing of that kind. This they all contended for, and confirmed their assertion by the express testimonies of the writers of the primitive churches.

To prove this to have been their principle in their separation from the church of Rome were to light, as they say, a candle in the sun. It were easy to fill up a volume with testimonies of it. After awhile this principle began to be weakened, when the interest of men made them except from this rule, things of outward order, with some rites and ceremonies, the ordaining whereof, they pleaded to be left unto churches as they saw good. Hereby this principle, I say, was greatly weakened. For no certain bounds could ever be assigned unto those things that are exempted from the regulation of the Scripture. And the same plea might be managed for many of the popish orders and ceremonies that were rejected, as forcibly as for them that were retained. And whereas all the reformed churches agreed to abide by this principle in matters of faith, there fell out an admirable harmony in their confessions thereof. But leaving the necessity of attending unto this rule, in the matter of order, ceremonies, rites, and modes of worship, with the state of churches, in their rule and polity, those differences and divisions ensued amongst them, which continue unto this day. But this persuasion in some places made a farther progress, namely, that it was lawful to impose on the consciences and practices of men, such things in religious worship, provided that they concerned outward order, rites, rule, and ceremonies, as are nowhere prescribed in the Scripture, and that on severe penalties ecclesiastical and civil. This almost utterly destroyed the great fundamental principle of the reformation, whereon the first reformers justified their separation from the church of Rome. For whereas it is supposed the right of them who are to be the imposers, to determine what doth belong unto the heads mentioned, they might under that pretence impose what they pleased, and refuse those whom they imposed them on the protection of the aforesaid principle, namely, that nothing ought to be so imposed that is not prescribed in the Scripture. This hath proved the rise of all endless differences and schisms amongst us, nor will they be healed until all Christians are restored unto their liberty, of being obliged in the things of God, only unto the authority of the Scripture.

The words of Mr. Chillingsworth unto this purpose are

emphatical, which I shall therefore transcribe, though that be a thing which I am very averse from.

'Require,' saith he, 'of Christians only to believe Christ, and to call no man master but him only; let those leave claiming of infallibility who have no right unto it, and let them that in their words disclaim it, disclaim it likewise in their actions; in a word, take away tyranny which is the devil's instrument to support errors and superstitions and impieties in the several parts of the world, which could not otherwise long withstand the power of truth; I say, take away tyranny, and restore Christians to their just and full liberty of captivating their understandings to the Scripture only; that universal liberty thus moderated may quickly reduce Christendom to truth and unity;' part i. chap. iv. sect. 16.

This fundamental principle of the first reformation we do not only firmly adhere unto, rejecting all those opinions and practices whereby its force is weakened and impaired, but also do willingly suffer the things that do befall us, in giving our testimony thereunto. Neither will there ever be peace among the churches of Christ in this world, until it be admitted in its whole latitude; especially in that part thereof wherein it excludes all impositions of things not prescribed in the Scripture. For there are but few persons who are capable of the subtlety of those reasonings, which are applied to weaken this principle in its whole extent. All men can easily see this, that the sufficiency of the Scripture in general, as unto all the ends of religion, is the only foundation they have to rest and build upon. They do see actually, that where men go about to prescribe things to be observed in divine worship, not appointed in the Scripture, that no two churches have agreed therein; but endless contentions have ensued; that no man can give an instance in particular of any thing that is necessary unto the rule of the church, or the observance of the commands of Christ in the worship of God, that is not contained in the Scripture; and hereon are ready to resolve to call no man master, but Christ; and to admit of nothing in religion, but what is warranted by his word.

2. The second principle of the reformation, whereon

the reformers justified their separation from the church of Rome, was this, 'That Christian people were not tied up unto blind obedience unto church guides, but were not only at liberty, but also obliged to judge for themselves, as unto all things that they were to believe and practise in religion and the worship of God.' They knew that the whole fabric of the papacy did stand on this basis or dunghill, that the mystery of iniquity was cemented by this device, namely, that the people were ignorant, and to be kept in ignorance, being obliged in all things unto an implicit obedience unto their pretended guides. And that they might not be capable of, nor fit for, any other condition, they took from them the only means of their instruction unto their duty, and the knowledge of it, that is, the use of the holy Scripture. But the first reformers did not only vindicate their right unto the use of the Scripture itself, but insisted on it as a principle of the reformation (and without which they could never have carried on their work), that they were in all concernments of religion to judge for themselves. And multitudes of them quickly manifested how meet and worthy they were to have this right restored unto them, in laying down their lives for the truth, suffering as martyrs under the power of their bishops.

This principle of the reformation, in like manner, is in no small degree weakened by many, and so the cause of it. Dr. Stillingfleet himself, pp. 127, 128. denies unto the people all liberty or ability to choose their own pastors, to judge what is meet for their own edification, what is heresy or a pernicious error, and what is not, or any thing of the like nature. This is almost the same with that of the Pharisees concerning them who admired and followed the doctrine of our Saviour, ὁ ὄχλος οὗτος ὁ μὴ γινώσκων τὸν νόμον; John vii. 49. 'This rabble which knows not the law.' Yet was it this people whom the apostles directed to choose out from among themselves persons meet for an ecclesiastical office; Acts vi. the same people who joined with the apostles and elders in the consideration of the grand case concerning the continuation of the legal ceremonies, and were associated with them in the determination of it; Acts xv. the same to whom all the apostolical epistles, excepting some to particular persons, were written, and unto whom such directions

were given, and duties enjoined in them, as suppose not only a liberty and ability to judge for themselves in all matters of faith and obedience, but also an especial interest in the order and discipline of the church; those who were to say unto Archippus (their bishop), 'Take heed unto the ministry thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it;' Col. iv. unto whom of all sorts, it is commanded that they should examine and try antichrists, spirits, and false teachers; that is, all sorts of heretics, and heresies, and errors; 1 John ii. iii. &c. that people who even in following ages, adhered unto the faith and the orthodox profession of it, when almost all their bishops were become Arian heretics, and kept their private conventicles in opposition unto them, at Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and other places, and who were so many of them burnt here in England by their own bishops, on the judgment they made of errors and heresies. And if the present people with whom the doctor is acquainted be altogether unmeet for the discharge of any of these duties, it is the fault of somebody else, besides their own.

This principle of the reformation, in vindication of the rights, liberties, and privileges of the Christian people, to judge and choose for themselves in matters of religion, to join freely in those church duties which are required of them, without which the work of it had never been carried on, we do abide by and maintain. Yea, we meet with no opposition more fierce, than upon the account of our asserting the liberties and right of the people in reference unto church-order and worship. But I shall not be afraid to say, that as the reformation was begun and carried on, on this principle; so when this people shall, through an apprehension of their ignorance, weakness, and unmeetness to discern and judge in matters of religion for themselves and their own duty, be kept and debarred from it; or when through their own sloth, negligence, and viciousness, they shall be really incapable to manage their own interest in church affairs, as being fit only to be governed, if not as brute creatures, yet as mute persons, and that these things are improved by the ambition of the clergy, engrossing all things in the church unto themselves, as they did in former ages, if the old popedom do not return, a new one will be erected as bad as the other.

3. Another principle of the reformation is, 'That there was not any catholic, visible, organical, governing church, traduced by succession into that of Rome, whence all church-power and order was to be derived.' I will not say that this principle was absolutely received by all the first reformers here in England; yet it was by the generality of them in the other parts of the world. For as they constantly denied that there was any catholic church, but that invisible of elect believers, allowing the external denomination of the church unto the diffused community of the baptized world; so believing and professing that the pope is antichrist, that Rome is mystical Babylon, the seat of the apostatized church of the Gentiles, devoted to destruction, they could acknowledge no such church-state in the Roman church, nor the derivation of any power and order from it. So far as there is a declension from this principle, so far the cause of the reformation is weakened, and the principal reason of separation from the Roman church is rejected, as shall be farther manifested, if occasion require it.

This principle we do firmly adhere unto; and not only so, but it is known, that our fixed judgment concerning the divine institution, nature, and order of evangelical churches, is such, as is utterly exclusive of the Roman church, as a body organized in and under the pope and his hierarchy, from any pretence unto church-state, order, or power. And it may be hence judged who do most weaken the cause of reformation, we or some of them at least, by whom we are opposed.

A second absurdity that he chargeth on our way is, 'That it would make union among the Protestant churches impossible, supposing them to remain as they are;' sect. 24. p. 186. To make good this charge, he insists on two things:

'1. That the Lutheran churches have the same and more ceremonies, and unscriptural impositions than our church hath.

'2. That notwithstanding these things, yet many learned Protestant divines have pleaded for union and communion with them, which upon our principles and suppositions, they could not have done.' But whether they plead for union and communion with them, by admitting into their churches, and submitting unto those ceremonies and un-

scriptural impositions, which is alone unto the doctor's purpose; or whether they judge their members obliged to communicate in local communion with them, under those impositions, he doth not declare. But whereas neither we nor our cause are in the least concerned in what the doctor here insists upon, yet because the charge is no less, than that our principles give disturbance unto the peace and union of all Protestant churches, I shall briefly manifest that they are not only conducive thereunto, but such as without which that peace and union will never be attained.

1. It is known unto all, that from the first beginning of the reformation, there were differences among the churches, which departed from the communion of the church of Rome. And as this was looked on as the greatest impediment unto the progress of the reformation, so it was not morally possible that in a work of that nature, begun and carried on by persons of all sorts, in many nations, of divers tongues and languages, none of them being divinely inspired, that it should otherwise fall out. God also in his holy wise providence suffered it so to be, for causes known then to himself, but since sundry of them have been made manifest in the event. For whereas there was an agreement in all fundamental articles of faith among them, and all necessary means of salvation, a farther agreement, considering our sloth, negligence, and proneness of men to abuse security and power, might have produced as evil effects as the differences have done; for those which have been on the one hand, and those which have been on the other, have been and would have been from the corrupt affections of the minds of men, and their secular interests.

2. These differences were principally in or about some doctrines of faith, whereon some fiery spirits among them, took occasion mutually and unjustly enough, to charge each other with heresy, especially was this done among the Lutherans, whose writings are stuffed with that charge, and miserable attempts to make it good. There were also other differences among them, with respect unto church-order, rites, ceremonies, and modes of worship. The church of England, as unto the government of the church and sundry other things, took a way by itself, which at present we do not consider.

3. Considering the agreement in all fundamental articles of faith between these churches thus at difference, and of what great use their union might be unto the Protestant religion, both as unto its spiritual and political interest in this world, the effecting of such a union among them hath been attempted by many. Private persons, princes, colloquies or synods of some of the parties at variance have sedulously engaged herein. I wish they had never missed it, in stating the nature of that union which in this case is alone desirable and alone attainable; nor in the causes of that disadvantageous difference that was between them. For hence it is come to pass, that although some verbal compositions have sometimes by some been consented unto, yet all things continue practically amongst them, as they were from the beginning. And there are yet persons who are managing proposals for such a union, with great projection in point of method for the compassing of it, and stating of the principles of agreement, some whereof I have by me. But the present state of things, in Europe, with the minds of potentates not concerned in these things, leave little encouragement for any such attempt, or expectation of any success.

4. After the trial an experience of a hundred and fifty years, it is altogether in vain, to be expected that any farther reconciliation or union should be effected between these Protestant churches by either party's relinquishment of the doctrines they have so long taught, professed, and contended for, or of their practice in divine worship, which they have so long been accustomed unto. We may as well expect that a river should run backwards, as expect any such things.

In this state of things, I say, the principles we proceed upon are the most useful unto the procuring of peace and union among these churches, in the state wherein they are, and without which it will never be effected. I shall therefore give an account of those of them, which are of this nature and tendency.

1. And the first is, the absolute necessity of a general reformation in life and manners of all sorts of persons, belonging unto these churches. It is sufficiently known what a woful condition the profession even of the Protestant re-

ligion is fallen into. How little evidence is there left of the power of evangelical grace, working in the hearts of men! What little diligence in the duties of holiness and righteousness! What a deluge of all sorts of vices hath overwhelmed the nations! And what indications there are of the displeasure of God against us, on the account of these things! Who doth not almost tremble at them? Calvin, unto whom I was newly sent by our reverend author, in answer to them who pleaded for a separation from a true church, because of the wickedness of many of its members, or any of them, adds unto it, 'It is a most just offence, and unto which there is too much occasion given in this miserable age. Nor is it lawful to excuse our cursed sloth, which the Lord will not let go unpunished, as he begins already to chastise us with grievous stripes. Woe, therefore, unto us who by our dissolute licentiousness in flagitious sins, do cause that the weak consciences of men should be wounded for us.' And if it were so then, the matter is not much mended in the age wherein we live. The truth is, sin and impiety are come to that height and impudence, sensuality and oppression are so diffused among all sorts of persons, conformity unto the fashion of the world become so universal, and the evidences of God's displeasure, with the beginnings and entrances of his judgments, are so displayed, as that if the reformation pleaded for be not speedily endeavoured, and vigorously pursued, it will be too late to talk of differences and union; destruction will swallow up all. Until this be agreed on, until it be attempted and effected in some good measure, all endeavours for farther union, whatever there appearing success should be (as probably it will be very small), will be of no use unto the honour of religion, the glory of Christ, nor good of the souls of men. In the mean time individual persons will do well to take care of themselves.

2. That all these differing churches, and whilst these differences do continue, be taught to prefer their general interest in opposition unto the kingdom of Satan and antichrist in the world, before the lesser things wherein they differ, and those occasional animosities that will ensue upon them. It hath been observed in many places, that the nearer some men or churches come together in their profession, the more distant they are in their affections; as the Lu-

therans in many places do more hate the Calvinists than the Papists; I hope it is not so among us. This makes it evident, that the want of necessary peace and union among churches, doth not proceed from the things themselves wherein they differ, but from the corrupt lusts and interests of the persons that differ. This evil can no otherwise be cured, but by such a reformation as shall in some measure reduce primitive simplicity, integrity, and love, such as were among the churches of the converted Jews and Gentiles, when they walked according unto the same rule in what they had attained, forbearing one another in love, as unto the things wherein they differed. Until this also be effected, all endeavours for farther union, whilst these differences continue (as they are like to do, unless the whole frame of things in Europe should be changed by some great revolution), will be fruitless and useless.

Were this conscientiously insisted on, out of a pure love unto Jesus Christ, with zeal for his glory, it would not only be of more use than innumerable wrangling disputes about the points in difference, but more than the exactest methods in contriving formularies of consent, or colloquies, or synodical conferences of the parties at variance, with all their solemnities, orders, limitations, precautions, concessions, and orations. Let men say what they will, it must be the revival, flourishing, and exercise of evangelical light, faith, and love, that shall heal the differences and breaches that are among the churches of Christ; nor shall any thing else be honoured with any great influence into that work.

3. That all communion of churches, as such, consists in the communion of faith and love, in the administration of the same sacraments, and common advice in things of common concernment. All these may be observed, when for sundry reasons the members of them cannot have local presential communion in some ordinances, with each church distinctly. If this truth were well established and consented unto, men might be easily convinced, that there is nothing wanting unto that evangelical union among churches which the gospel requires, but only their own humble, holy, peaceable Christian walking in their several places and stations. But where men put their own interests and possession of

present advantages, clothed under the pretence of things necessary thereunto, into conditions of communion, or divest it of that latitude wherein Christ hath left it, by new limitations of their own, it will never be attained on the true evangelical principles, that it must proceed upon. For however any may be displeased with it, I must assert and maintain, that there is nothing required by our Lord Jesus Christ, unto this end of the communion of churches, nor to any other end of church-order or worship whatever, but that only in whose observance and performance there is an actual exercise of evangelical grace in obedience unto him.

4. That all private members of these several churches which agree in the communion before mentioned, be left unto their own liberty and consciences, to communicate in any of those churches, either occasionally or in a fixed way and manner. Neither orders nor compulsory decrees will be useful in this matter, in comparison of their own declared liberty. And so it was among the primitive churches.

5. Where men are invincibly hindered from total communion with any church, by impositions which they cannot comply withal without sin, or by continuing in it, are deprived of the due means of their edification, the churches whereunto they did belong refusing all reformation; it is lawful for them, in obedience unto the law of Christ, to reform themselves, and to make use of the means appointed by him for their edification, abiding constantly in the communion of all true churches before described. I confess this is that which we cannot digest; namely, an imagination that the Lord Jesus Christ hath obliged his disciples, those that believe in him, to abide always in such societies, as wherein not only things are imposed on their obedience and observance which he hath not commanded, but they are also forced to live in the neglect of expressed duties which he requireth of them, and the want of that means of their own edification, which, without the restraint at present upon them, they might enjoy according unto his mind and will. Believers were not made for churches, nor for the advantage of them that rule in them; but churches were made for believers and their edification, nor are of any use farther than they tend thereunto.

These are the premises whereon we proceed in all that we do; and they are so far from being obstructive of the peace and union of the Protestant churches, as that without them, they will never be promoted nor attained. And I do beg of this worthy person that he would not despise these things, but know assuredly, that nothing would be so effectual to procure the union he desireth, as a universal reformation of all sorts of persons, according unto the rule and law of Christ, which it may be, no man hath greater ability and opportunity in conjunction for, than himself. For woe be unto us, if whilst we contend about outward peace in smaller things, we neglect to make peace with God, and so expose ourselves and the whole nation unto his desolating judgments, which seem already to be impendent over us.

The third absurdity which he chargeth on our practice is, 'That it will justify the ancient schisms which have been always condemned in the Christian church;' and in the management of this charge, he proceedeth, if I mistake not, with more than ordinary vehemency and severity, though it be a matter wherein we are least of all concerned.

To make effectual this charge, he first affirms in general, 'That setting aside a few things, they pleaded the same reasons for their separation, as I do for ours;' which how great a mistake it is shall be manifested immediately. Secondly, He gives instances in several schisms, that were so condemned by the Christian church, and whose practice is justified by us.

In answer hereunto, I shall first premise some things in general, shewing the insufficiency of this argument to prove against us the charge of schism, and then consider the instances produced by him. I say,

1. In times of decay, the declining times of churches or states, it cannot be, but that some will be uneasy in their minds, although they know not how to remedy what is amiss, nor it may be fix on the particulars which are the right and true causes of the state which they find troublesome unto them. And whilst it is so with them, it is not to be admired at, that some persons do fall into irregular attempts for the redressing of what is amiss. The church, where the

instances insisted on happened, was falling into a mysterious decay from its original institution, order, and rule, which afterward increased more and more continually. But all being equally involved in the same declension, the remedies which they proposed who were uneasy either in themselves, or in the manner of their application, were worse than the disease; which yet lying uncured and continually increasing, proved in the issue the ruin of them all. But here lay the original of the differences and schisms which fell out in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries; that having all in some measure departed from the original institution, rule, and order of evangelical churches, in sundry things, and cast themselves into new forms and orders, their differences and quarrels related all unto them, and could have had no such occasion, had they kept themselves unto their primitive constitution. Wherefore those schisms which were said to be made by them that continued sound in the faith, as those of the Andeans and Meletians, as by some is pretended, and Johannites at Constantinople, with sundry other, seeing they disserted not any order of divine institution, but another which the churches were insensibly fallen into; no judgment can be made upon a mere separation, whether of the parties at difference were to blame; I am sure enough that sometimes neither of them could be excused. Whether the causes, reasons, ends, designs, and ways of the management of those differences that were between them, on which schisms in their present order did ensue, were just, regular, according to the mind of Christ, proceeding from faith and love, is that whose determination must fix aright the guilt of the divisions that were among them. And whereas we judge most of those who so separated from the church of old, as is here alleged, to have failed in these things, and therein to have contracted guilt unto themselves, as occasioning unwarrantable divisions, and missing wholly the only way of cure for what was really blameworthy in others; yet whereas we allow nothing to be schism properly, but what is contrary to Christian love, and destructive of some institution of Christ, we are not much concerned who was in the right or wrong, in those contests which fell out among the orthodox themselves, but only as

they were carried on unto a total renunciation of all communion whatever; but only that which was enclosed unto their own party.

2. To evidence that we give the least countenance unto the ancient schisms, or do contract the guilt with the authors of them, the thing aimed at, there are three things incumbent on him to prove.

1. That our parochial churches, from whom we do refrain actual presential communion in all ordinances, where it is required by law, which cannot be many and but one at one time, do succeed into the room of that church, in a separation from which, those schisms did consist. For we pass no judgment on any other church, but what concerns ourselves as unto present duty, though that in a nation may be extended unto many or all of the same sort. But these schisms consisted in a professed separation from the whole catholic church, that is, all Christians in the world, who joined not with them in their opinions and practices, and from the whole church-state then passant and allowed. But our author knows full well, that there are others, who long before our parochial churches, do lay claim unto the absolute enclosure of this church-state unto themselves, and thereon condemn both him and us, and all the Protestants in the world, of the same schism that those of old were guilty of; especially they make a continual clamour about the Novatians and Donatists. I know that he is able to dispossess the church of Rome from that usurpation of the state and rights of the ancient catholic church, from whence those separations were made, and it hath been sufficiently done by others. But so soon as we have cast that out of possession, to bring in our parochial assemblies into the room of it, and to press the guilt of separation from them, with the same reasons and arguments as we were all of us but newly pressed withal by the Romanists, namely, that hereby we give countenance unto them, yea, do the same things with them, who made schisms in separating from the catholic church of old, is somewhat severe and unequal.

Wherefore, unless the church from which they separated, which was the whole catholic church in the world, not agreeing and acting with them, and those parochial assemblies from whose communion we refrain, are the same and

of the same consideration, nothing can be argued from those ancient schisms against us, nor is any countenance given by us unto them. For if it be asked of us, whether it be free or lawful for believers to join in society and full communion with other churches, besides those that are of our way and especial communion, we freely answer, that we no way doubt of it, nor do judge for their so doing.

2. It must be proved unto the end proposed, that the occasions and reasons of their separation of old, were the same, or of the same nature only, with those which we plead, for our refraining communion from parochial assemblies. Now, though the doctor here makes a flourish with some expressions about zeal, discipline, purity of the church, edification (which he will not find in any of their pretences), yet in truth there is not one thing alleged, wherein there is a coincidence between the occasions and reasons pleaded by them, and ours.

It is known that the principal thing in general which we insist upon is, the unwarrantable imposition of unscriptural terms and conditions of communion upon us. Was there any such thing pleaded by them that made the schisms of old? Indeed they were all of them imposers, and separated from the church because they would not submit unto their impositions. Some bishops, or some that would have been bishops but could not, entertaining some new conceit of their own, which they would have imposed on all others, being not submitted unto therein, were the causes of all those schisms which were justly esteemed criminal. So was it with the Novatians and Donatists in an especial manner. Even the great Tertullian (though no bishop) left the communion of the church on this ground. For because they would not admit of the strict observance of some austere severities in fasting, abstinence from sundry meats, and watching, with the like, which he esteemed necessary, though no way warranted by Scripture rule or example, he utterly renounced their communion; and countenanced himself by adhering unto the dotages of Montanus. It is true, some of them contended for a severity of discipline in the church, but they did it not upon any pretence of the neglect of it in them unto whom the administration of it was committed; but for the want of establishing a false principle, rule, or

erroneous doctrine which they advanced; namely, that the most sincere penitents were never more to be admitted into ecclesiastical communion; whereby they did not establish, but overthrow one of the principal ends of church discipline. They did not therefore press for the power or the use of the keys, as is pretended, but advanced a false doctrine in prejudice both unto the power and use of them. They pretended indeed unto the purity of the church, not that there were none impure, wicked, and hypocritical among them, but that none might be admitted who had once fallen, though really made pure by sincere repentance. This was their zeal for purity. If a man were overtaken, if they could catch him in such a fault, as by the rules of the passant discipline he was to be cast out of the church, there they had him safe for ever. No evidence of the most sincere repentance could prevail for a readmission into the church. And because other churches would admit them, they renounced all communion with them, as no churches of Christ. Are these our principles? are these our practices? do we give any countenance unto them by any thing we say or do? I somewhat wonder that the doctor, from some general expressions, and casting their pretences under new appearances, should seem to think that there is the least coincidence between what they insisted on, and what we plead in our own defence. He may see now more fully, what are the reasons of our practice, and I hope thereon will be of another mind; not as unto our cause in general, which I am far enough from the expectation of, but as unto this invidious charge of giving countenance unto the schisms condemned of old in the church. And we shall see immediately, what were the occasions of those schisms which we are as remote from giving countenance unto, as unto the principles and reasons which they pleaded in their own justification.

3. It ought also to be proved, that the separation which is charged on us, is of the same nature with that charged on them of old; for otherwise we cannot be said to give any countenance unto what they did. For it is known they so separated from all other churches in the world, as to confine the church of Christ unto their own party, to condemn all others, and to deny salvation unto all that abode in their communion, which the Donatists did with the greatest fierce-

ness. This was that which if any thing did truly and properly constitute them schismatics; as it doth those also, who deny at this day church-state and salvation unto such churches as have not diocesan bishops. Now there is no principle in the world that we do more abhor. We grant a church-state unto all, however it may be defective or corrupted, and a possibility of salvation unto all their members, which are not gathered in pernicious errors, overthrowing the foundation, nor idolatrous in their worship, and who have a lawful ministry with sufficient means for their edification, though low in its measures and degrees. We judge none but with respect unto our own duty, as unto the impositions attempted to be laid on us, and the acts of communion required of us, which we cannot avoid; nor can any man else, let him pretend what he will to the contrary, avoid the making of a judgment for himself in these things, unless he be brutish. These things are sufficient to evidence that there is not the least countenance given unto the ancient schisms by any principles of ours; yet I shall add some farther considerations, on the instances he gives unto the same purpose.

The first is, that the Novatians, whose pretences were the discipline and purity of the churches, wherein he says, 'There was a concurrence of Dr. Owen's pleas; zeal for reformation of discipline, the greater edification of the people, and the asserting of their right in choosing such a pastor as was likely to promote their edification.' I am sorry that interest and party should sway with learned men, to seek advantages unto their cause so unduly. The story in short is this; Novatus, or Novatianus rather, being disappointed in his ambitious design to have been chosen bishop of the church of Rome, Cornelius being chosen by much the major part of the church, betook himself to indirect means to weaken and invalidate the election of Cornelius. And this he did by raising a new principle of false doctrine, whereunto he as falsely accommodated the matter of fact. The error he broached and promoted was that 'there was no place for repentance' (such as whereon they should be admitted into the church) 'unto them who had fallen into sin after baptism;' nor, as some add, any salvation to be obtained by them who had fallen in the time of persecution. This

the ancient church looked on as a pestilent heresy; and as such was it condemned in a considerable council at Rome with Cornelius; Euseb. lib. 6. cap. 43. where also is reported the decree which they made in the case, wherein they call his opinion cruel or inhuman, and contrary to brotherly love. As such it is strenuously confuted by Cyprian, Epist. 82. ad Antonianum. But because the church would not submit unto this novel false opinion of his, contrary to the Scripture and the discipline of the church, he and all his followers separated from all the churches in the world, and rebaptized all that were baptized in the orthodox churches, they denying unto them the means of salvation. Cyprian ad Julian, Epist. 73. Euseb. lib. 7. cap. 8. That which was most probably false also in matter of fact when this foolish opinion, which Dionysius of Alexandria in his epistle to Dionysius of Rome, calls 'a most profane doctrine, reflecting unmerciful cruelty on our most gracious Lord Jesus Christ,' Euseb. lib. 7. cap. 8. was invented to be subservient unto, was that many of those by whom Cornelius was chosen bishop, were such as had denied the faith under the persecution of Decius the emperor. This also was false in matter of fact. For although that church continued in the ancient faith and practice of receiving penitents after their fall, yet there were no such number of them, as to influence the election of Cornelius. So Cyprian testifieth, 'Factus est Cornelius Episcopus, de Dei et Christi ejus judicio, de Clericorum pœne omnium testimonio, de suffragio plebis,' &c. Epist. 52. On that false opinion and this frivolous pretence they continued their schism. Hence afterward, when Constantine the emperor spake with Acesius the bishop of the Novatians at Constantinople, finding him sound in the faith of the Trinity, which was then impugned by Arius, he asked him why then he did not communicate with the church; whereon he began to tell him a story of what had happened in the time of Decius the emperor, pleading nothing else for himself; the emperor replying only, 'O Acesius, set up a ladder and clime alone by thyself into heaven,' left him. Socrat. lib. 1. cap. 7.

This error endeavoured to be imposed on all churches, this false pretence in matter of fact, with the following pride in the condemnation of all other churches, denying unto

them the lawful use of the sacraments, and rebaptizing them who were baptized in them, do, if we may believe the doctor herein, contain all my pleas for the forbearance of communion with parochial assemblies, and have countenance given unto them by our principles and practices.

Of the Meletians, whom he reckons up in the next place, no certain account can be given. Epiphanius reports Meletus himself to have been a good honest orthodox bishop; and in the difference between him and Peter bishop of Alexandria to have been more for truth, as the other was more for love and charity. And according unto him, it was Peter and not Meletus that began the schism. Hæres. 68. N. 2, 3. But others give quite another account of him. Socrates affirms that in time of persecution he had sacrificed to idols, and was for that reason deposed from his episcopacy by Peter of Alexandria; lib. 3. cap. 6. Hence he was enraged against him, and filled all Thebais and Egypt with tumults against him, and the church of Alexandria, with intolerable arrogance, because he was convicted of sundry wickednesses by Peter. Theod. Hist. lib. 1. cap. 8. And his followers quickly complied with the Arians for their advantage. The error he proceeded on, according to Epiphanius, was the same with that of Novatus; which how it could be, if he himself had fallen in persecution, and sacrificed, as Socrates relates, I cannot understand. This schism of bishop Meletus also it is thought meet to be judged, that we should give countenance unto.

All things are in like manner uncertain concerning Audus and his followers, whom he mentions in the next place. The man is represented by Epiphanius to have been a good man, of a holy life, sound in the faith, full of zeal and love to the truth. But finding many things amiss in the church, among the clergy and people, he freely reproved them, for covetousness, luxury, and disorders in ecclesiastical affairs. Hereon he stirred up the hatred of many against himself, as Chrysostom did for the same cause afterward at Constantinople. Hereupon he was vexed, persecuted, and greatly abused, all which he bare patiently and continued in the discharge of his duty, as it fell out also with Chrysostom. Nevertheless he abode firmly and tenaciously in the communion of the church; but was at length

cast out, as far as it appears by him, for the honest discharge of his duty; whereon he gathered a great party unto himself. But Theodoret and others, affirm him to have been the author of the impious heresy of the Anthropomorphitæ, his principal followers being those monks of Egypt which afterward made such tumults in defence of that foolish imagination; and that this was the cause why he was cast out of the church, and set up a party of the same opinion with him; lib. 4. cap. 10. Yea, he also ascribes unto him some foolish opinions of the Manichees. What is our concernment in these things I cannot imagine.

Eustathius the bishop of Sebastia in Armenia, and his followers, are also instanced in, as orthodox schismatics, and as such were condemned in a council at Gongræ in Paphlagonia. But indeed before that council, Eustathius had been condemned by his own father Eulanius and other bishops, at Cæsarea in Cappadocia. And he was so for sundry foolish opinions and evil practices, whereby he deserved to be so dealt withal. It doth not unto me appear certainly whether he fell into those opinions before his rejection at Cæsarea, where he was principally if not only charged with his indecent and fantastical habit and garments. Wherefore at the council of Gangræ, he was not admitted to make any apology for himself, nor could be heard, because he had innovated many things, after his deposition at Cæsarea; such as forbidding of marriage, shaving of women, denying the lawfulness of priests keeping their wives, who were married before their ordination, getting away servants from their masters, and the like. Socrat. Hist. lib. 2. cap. 3. These were his pretences of sanctity and purity, as the doctor acknowledgeth; and I appeal unto his ingenuity and candour, whether any countenance be given unto such opinions and practices thereon, by any thing we say or do.

This instance, and some others of an alike nature, the doctor affirms that he produced in his sermon, but that 'they were gently passed over by myself and Mr. B.' I confess I took no notice of them, because I was satisfied that the cause under consideration was no way concerned in them. And the doctor might to as good purpose have instanced in forty other schisms, made for the most part by the ambition

of bishops, in the churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Rome, and sundry other places; yea, in that made by Epiphanius himself at Constantinople, upon as weighty a cause, as that of those who contended about, and strove for and against, the driving of sheep over the bridge, where there were none present.

The story of the Luciferians, is not worth repeating; in short, Lucifer the bishop of Caralli in Sardinia, being angry that Paulinus, whom he had ordained bishop at Antioch, was not received, fell into great dissension with Eusebius bishop of Vercells in Italy, who had been his companion in banishment, because he approved not what he had done at Antioch. And continuing to contend for his own bishop, it occasioned a great division among the people, whereon he went home to his own place, leaving behind him a few followers, who wrangled for a time about the ordination of bishops by Arians, by whose means Lucifer had been banished, and so after awhile disappeared.

I had almost missed the instance of the Donatists. But the story of them is so well known, that it will not bear the repetition. For although there be no mention of them in Socrates or Zozoman, nor the History of Theodoret, yet all things that concerned them are so fully declared in the writings of Austin and Optatus against them as there needs no other account of them. And this instance of an heretical schism, is that which the Papists vehemently urge against the church of England itself, and all other Protestants. Here their weapon is borrowed for a little while, to give a wound unto our cause, but in vain. Yet I know full well, that it is easier for some men on their principles, to flourish with this weapon against us, than to defend themselves against it in the hands of the Papists. In brief, these Donatists were upon the matter of the same opinion with the Novatians; and as these grounded their dissension on the receiving those into the church who had fallen and sacrificed under Decius, so did these on a pretence of severity against those who had been Traditors, under Maximinus. Upon this pretence, improved by many false allegations, Donatus, and those that followed him rejected Cecilianus, who was lawfully chosen and ordained bishop of Carthage, setting up one Majorinus in opposition unto him. Not suc-

ceeding herein, on this foolish unproved pretence, that Cecilianus had been ordained by [a] Traditor, they rejected the communion of all the churches in the world, confined the whole church of Christ unto their own party, deniedsalvation unto any other, rebaptized all that came unto them from other churches, and together with a great number of bishops that joined with them, fell into most extravagant exorbitances.

Upon the consideration of these schisms the doctor concludes, 'That on these grounds there hath scarce been any considerable schism in the Christian church, but may be justified upon Dr. Owen's reasons, for separation from our church.' Concerning which I must take the liberty to say, that I do not remember that ever I read in any learned author, an inference made, or conclusion asserted, that had so little countenance given unto it by the premises whence it is inferred, as there is into this, by the instances before insisted on, whence it is pretended to be educed.

All that is of argument in this story is this, That there were of old some bishops, with one or two who would have been bishops and could not, who to exalt and countenance themselves against those who were preferred to bishoprics before them, and above them, invented and maintained false doctrinal principles, the confession whereof they would have imposed on other churches; and because they were not admitted, they separated at once from all other churches in the world but their own, condemning them as no churches, as not having the sacraments or means of salvation; for which they were condemned as schismatics: therefore, those who own not subjection to diocesan bishops, by virtue of any institution or command of Christ, who refrain communion from parochial assemblies, because they cannot, without sin to themselves, comply with all things imposed on them in the worship of God, and ecclesiastical rule, without judging their state, or the salvation of their members, are in like manner as they, guilty of schism.

But we have fixed grounds whereon to try, examine, judge, and condemn all schisms that are justly so called, all such as those before mentioned. If separations arise and proceed from principles of false doctrine and errors, like those of the Novatians and Donatists; if they are occasioned

by ambition and desire of pre-eminence, like those that fell out among the bishops of those days, when their parishes and claims were not regulated by the civil power as now they are; if they do so from a desire to impose principles and practices not warranted in the Scripture, on others, as it was with Tertullian; if for slight reasons they rend and destroy that church-state and order which themselves approve of, as it was with all the ancient schismatics, who were bishops, or would feign to have been; if those that make them or follow in them deny salvation unto all that join not with them, and condemn all other churches as being without God's covenant, and the sacraments, as did the Donatists and those do, who deny these things unto all churches who have not diocesan bishops; if there be not a sufficient justifiable cause pleaded for it, that those who make such a separation cannot abide in the communion which they forsake, without wounding their own consciences, and do give evidences of their abiding in the exercise of love towards all the true disciples of Christ, we are satisfied that we have a rule infallibly directing us to make a judgment concerning it.

Our author adds, sect. 26. p. 197. 'Another argument against this course of separation is, that these grounds will make separation endless; which is to suppose all the exhortations of the Scripture to peace and unity among Christians, useless.' But why so? Is there nothing in the authority of Christ, and the sense of the account which is to be given unto him, nothing in the rule of the word, nothing in the works of the ministry and exercise of gospel discipline, to keep professed disciples of Christ unto their duty, and within the bounds of order divinely prescribed unto them, unless they are fettered and staked down with human laws and constitutions? Herein I confess I differ, and shall do so whilst I am in this world, from our reverend author and others. To say as he doth (upon a supposition of the taking away of human impositions, laws, and canons), that 'there are no bounds set unto separation but what the fancies of men will dictate unto them,' is dishonourable unto the gospel and somewhat more. To suppose that the authority of Christ the rule of the word, and the work of the ministry, are not sufficient to prescribe bounds unto separation effi-

caciously affecting the consciences of believers; or that any other bounds can be assigned as obligatory unto their consciences, is what cannot be admitted. The Lord Christ hath commanded love and union among his disciples; he hath ordained order and communion in his churches; he hath given unto them and limited their power: he hath prescribed rules whereby they and all their members ought to walk; he hath forbidden all schisms and divisions; he hath appointed and limited all necessary separations, and hath truly given all the bounds unto it, that the consciences of men are or can be affected withal. But then it is said, 'If this be all, separation will be endless:' if such a separation be intended as is an unlawful schism, I say, it may be it will, even as persecution and other evils, sins, and wickednesses will be, notwithstanding his severe prohibition of them. What he hath done is the only means to preserve his own disciples from all sinful separation, and is sufficient thereunto. Herein lieth the original mistake in this matter; we have lost the apprehension that the authority of Christ in the rule of his word, and works of his Spirit, is every way sufficient for the guiding, governing, and preserving of his disciples, in the church-order by him prescribed, and the observance of the duties by him commanded. It hath been greatly lost in the world for many ages; and therefore, instead of faithful ministerial endeavours to enforce a sense of it on the consciences of all Christians, they have been let loose from it, through a confidence in other devices, to keep them unto their duty and order. And if these devices, be they ecclesiastical canons or civil penalties, be not enforced on them all, the world is made to believe, that they are left unto the dictates of their own fancies and imaginations, as if they had no concern in Christ or his authority, in this matter. But for my part, I shall never desire, nor endeavour to keep any from schism or separation, but by the ways and means of Christ's appointment, and by a sense of his authority on their own consciences.

The remainder of his discourse on this head, consists in a lepid dramatical oration, framed and feigned for one of his opposers; wherein he makes him undertake the patronage of schism before Cyprian and Austin. The learned person intended is very well able to defend and vindicate himself,

which I suppose also he will do. In the mean time I cannot but say two things.

1. That the imposition on him of extenuating the guilt of any real schism, is that which none of his words do give the least countenance unto.

2. That the doctor's attempt in his feigned oration to accommodate his principles or ours, unto the case of the Donatists for their justification (the weakness whereof is evident to every one who knows any thing of the case of the Donatists), is such an instance of the power of interest, a design to maintain a cause, causelessly undertaken, by all manner of artifices and pretences, prevailing in the minds of men otherwise wise and sober, as is to be lamented.

We come at length in the fifth place, sect. 28. p. 209. unto that which is indeed of more importance duly to be considered, than all that went before. For as our author observes, it is that, 'wherein the consciences of men are concerned.' This argument, therefore, he takes from the obligation which lies upon all Christians to preserve the peace and unity of the church. For the confirmation of this argument, and the application of it unto the case of them who refrain from total communion with our parochial assemblies, which alone is the case in hand, he lays down sundry suppositions, which I shall consider in their order, although they may be all granted without any disadvantage unto our cause. But they will be so the better, when they are rightly stated.

1. His first supposition is, 'That Christians are under the strictest obligations to preserve the peace and unity of the church.'

This being the foundation of all that follows, it must be rightly stated. And to that end three things may be inquired into.

1. What is that church, whose peace and unity we are obliged to preserve. For there are those who lay the firmest claim unto the name, power, and privileges of the church, with whom we are obliged to have neither peace nor unity in the worship of God.

2. What is that peace and unity which we are so obliged to preserve.

3. By what means they are to be preserved.

(1.) We are obliged to 'follow peace with all men,' to 'seek

peace and pursue it,' and 'if it be possible to live peaceably with all men.'

(2.) There is a peculiar obligation upon us, to seek the peace and prosperity of the whole visible church of Christ on earth, and therein as we have opportunity to do good unto the whole household of faith. And considering what differences, what divisions, what exasperations there are among professors of the name of Christ all the world over, to abide steadfast in seeking the good of them all, and doing good unto them as we have opportunity, is as evident an indication of gospel love, as any thing else whatever can be.

(3.) As unto particular churches, there is an especial obligation upon us, to preserve their peace and unity from our own voluntary consent, to walk in them in obedience unto the commands of Christ. Where this is not, we are left unto the general obligation of seeking the peace of all men, and of the whole professing church in an especial manner, but have no other peculiar obligation thereunto. For being cast into churches of this or that form, merely by human constitutions and laws, or by inveterate traditions, lays no new obligation upon any to seek their peace and unity; but whilst they abide in them, they are left unto the influence of other general commands which are to be applied unto their present circumstances. For into what state or condition soever Christians are cast, they are obliged to live peaceably whilst they abide in it.

2. It may be inquired, what is that peace and unity of the church, that we are bound to preserve. There may be an agreement with some kind of peace and unity in evil. They are highly pretended unto in the church of Rome, but they are so in idolatry, superstition, and heresy. There may be peace and unity in any false and heretical church; the unity of Simeon and Levi, brethren in evil. But the peace and unity which we are obliged to observe in particular churches, is the consent and agreement of the church in general, and all the members of it, walking under the conduct of this guide in a due observation of all the institutions and commands of Christ, performing towards the whole and each other, the mutual duties required by him, from a principle of faith and love. This, and this alone, is that unity and peace, which we are peculiarly obliged to preserve in

particular churches; what is more than this, relates unto the general commands of love, unity, and peace before mentioned.

3. Wherefore, this states the means whereby we are to preserve this peace and unity; for we are not to endeavour it,

(1.) By a neglect or omission of the observance of any of the commands of Christ. Nor,

(2.) By doing or practising any thing in divine worship, which he hath not appointed. Nor,

(3.) By partaking in other men's sins, through a neglect of our own duty. Nor,

(4.) By foregoing the means of our own edification which he commands us to make use of. For these things have no tendency to the preservation of that peace: and his third supposition, is, 'That nothing can discharge a Christian from the obligation to communion with his fellow-members, but what is allowed by Christ or his apostles, as a sufficient reason of it.' It is fully agreed unto, where a man is a member of any church of divine institution by his own consent and virtual consideration, nothing can discharge him from communion with that church, but what is allowed by Christ as a sufficient reason for it.

But a little farther inquiry may be made into these things. It was before asserted, that all things lawful were to be done for the preservation of the peace of the church. Here it is pleaded that there are many obligations on us to preserve its peace and unity. I desire to know, unto whom these rules are obligatory? who they are that ought to yield obedience unto them? If it be said, that these rules are not prescribed unto the rulers and guides of the church, but unto them only who are under their conduct, I desire a proof of it, for at the first view it is very absurd. For as the preservation of the peace and unity of the church, is properly incumbent on them who are the rulers of it, and it is continually pleaded by them that so it doth, so all the rules given for that end, do or should principally, and in the first place, effect them and their consciences. And these are the rules of their duty herein which are laid down by the doctor. I desire therefore to know, that since there are such obligations on us to preserve the peace and unity of the

church, that for that end we must do what we lawfully may; whether the same rule doth not oblige us to forbear the doing of what we may lawfully forbear, with respect unto the same end. Nay, this obligation of forbearing what we may do, and yet may forbear to do without sin, for the peace and unity of the church, especially when any would be offended with our doing that which we may lawfully forbear to do, is exemplified in the Scripture, confirmed by commands and instances, is more highly rational, and less exposed unto danger in practice, than the other of doing what we can.

Now things that are not necessary in themselves, nor necessary to be observed by a just scandal and offence in case of their omission, are things that may be lawfully forborn. Suppose now the rules insisted on to be given principally and in the first place unto the rulers of the church; I desire to know whether they are not obliged by them, for the preservation of the peace and unity of the church, to forbear the imposition of such things on the practice of the whole church in the worship of God, as being no way necessary in themselves, nor such whose omission or the omission of whose imposition, can give scandal or offence unto any; if they are obliged by them so to do, it will be evident where the blame of the division amongst us must lie. To say they are not obliged hereunto by virtue of these rules, is to say, that although the preservation of the peace and unity of the church be incumbent on them in a particular manner, and the chief of them can assign no other end of the office they lay claim unto, but only its expediency, or, as is pretended, its necessity unto the preservation of the peace and unity of the church; yet they are not by virtue of any divine rules obliged thereunto. But it seems to me somewhat unequal, that in this contest about the preservation of the peace of the church, we should be bound by rules to do all that we can, whatever it be, and those who differ from us be left absolutely at their liberty, so as not to be obliged to forbear, what they may lawfully so do. But to proceed.

Upon these suppositions and in the confirmation of them, the doctor produceth a passage out of Irenæus, whose impartial consideration he chargeth on us with great solemnity, as we love our own souls. Now although that passage in that great and holy person, be not new unto me,

having not only read it many a time in his book, but frequently met with it urged by Papists against all Protestants; yet, upon the doctor's intimation, I have given it again the consideration required. The words as they lie in the author are to this purpose.

'We shall also judge them, who make schisms being vain, 'qui sunt immanes,' or 'inanes,' not having the love of God, rather considering their own profit, than the unity of the church; who for small or any causes, rend and divide the glorious body of Christ, and as much as in them lies destroy it; speaking peace, but designing war, straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel. For there can be no rebuke of things by them, to equal the mischief of schism; lib. 4. cap. 62.

I know not why he should give us such a severe charge for the impartial consideration of these words; that as we love our souls, we should impartially and without prejudice consider them. We hope that out of love to the truth, the glory of Christ, and care of our own souls, we do so consider, and have long since so considered, whatever belongs unto the cause wherein we engaged, and the oppositions that are made unto it. Nor will we be offended with any, that shall yet call on us to persist and proceed in the same way. But why such a charge should be laid on us with respect unto these words of Irenæus, I know not. For although we greatly value the words and judgment of that holy person, that great defender of the mystery and truth of the gospel, and of the liberty of the churches from unwarrantable impositions, yet it is the word of Christ and his apostles alone, whereby we must be regulated and determined in these things, if we love our own souls.

Besides, What are we concerned in them; is every separation from a church a schism? Our author shews the contrary immediately. Is refraining communion in a church-state not of divine institution, and in things not prescribed by the Lord Christ in the worship of God, holding communion in faith and love with all the true churches of Christ in the world, a damnable schism, or any schism at all? Hath the reverend author in his whole book once attempted to prove it to be so, though this be the whole of the matter in difference between us? Is our forbearance of communion

in parochial assemblies, upon the reasons before pleaded, especially that of human impositions, of the same nature with the schism from the whole catholic church, without pretence of any such impositions? Doth he judge us to be such as have no love unto God; such as prefer our own profit before the unity of the church? I heartily wish and pray, that he may never have a share in that profit and advantage which we have made unto ourselves by our principles and practice. Poverty, distress, ruin to our families, dangers, imprisonments, revilings with contemptuous reproaches, comprise the profit we have made unto ourselves. Is our refraining communion in some outward order, modes, and rites of men's institution, our want of conscientious submission unto the courts of chancellors, commissaries, officials, &c. a rending and destroying of the glorious body of Christ? Is it cemented, united, and compacted or fitly framed together by these things? They formerly pretended to be his coat, and must they now be esteemed to be his glorious body, when they no way belong unto the one or the other? Is the application of these things unto us, an effect of that love, charity, and forbearance which are the only preventive means of schism, and whereof if men are void, it is all one upon the matter whether they are schismatics or no? for they will be so when it is for their advantage. Wherefore we are not concerned in these things. Let whosoever will declare and vehemently assert us to be guilty of schism, which they cannot prove, we can cheerfully subscribe unto these words of Irenæus.

It may not be impertinent on this occasion to desire of some others, that as they love their own souls, and have compassion for the souls of other men; they would seriously consider, what state and condition things are come unto in the church of England; how much ignorance, profaneness, sensuality, do spread themselves over the nation; what neglect of the most important duties of the gospel; yea, what scoffing at the power of religion doth abound amongst us; what an utter decay and loss there is of all the primitive discipline of the church, what multitudes are in the way of eternal ruin, for want of due instruction and example from them who should lead them; how great a necessity there is of a universal reformation, and how securely negligent of it,

all sorts of persons are. What have been the pernicious effects of imposing things unnecessary and unscriptural on the consciences and practices of men in the worship of God, whereby the church hath been deprived of the labour of so many faithful ministers, who might have at least assisted in preventing that decay of religion which every day increaseth among us; how easy a thing it were for them, to restore evangelical peace and unity amongst all Protestants, without the loss of their ministry, without the diminution of their dignity, without deprivation of any part of their revenues, without the neglect of any duty, without doing any thing against their light and consciences, with respect unto any divine obligation; and thereon set themselves seriously to endeavour the remedy of these and other evils of the like nature, under a sense of that great account which they must shortly give before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ.

He proceeds to consider the cases wherein the Scripture allows of separation, which he affirms to be three.

The first is in case of idolatrous worship. This none can question, they do not see, from whom yet we all separate as from idolaters.

The second is in case of false doctrine being imposed instead of true; which he confirms with sundry instances. But there is a little difficulty in this case; for,

1. It is uncertain when a doctrine may be said to be imposed. Is it when it is taught and preached by the guides and governors of the church, or any of them, without control? If so, then is such preaching a sufficient cause of separation, and will justify them who do at present separate from any church, whose ministers preach false doctrine. How false doctrine can be otherwise imposed I know not, unless it be by exacting an express confession of it as truth.

2. What false doctrine it is, which is of this importance as to justify separation, is not easily determinable.

3. If the guides and governors of the church do teach this false doctrine, who shall judge of it, and determine it so to be, and that ultimately, so as to separate from a church thereon? shall the people do it themselves? are they meet? are they competent for it? are they to make such a judgment on the doctrine of their guides? do they know what is heresy? have they read Epiphanius or Binius? How

comes this allowance to be made unto them, which elsewhere is denied?

This third is, In case men make things indifferent necessary to salvation, and divide the church on that account. But,

1. I know not which is to precede or go before, their division of the church, or the just separation, nor how they are to be distinguished; but it was necessary to be so expressed.

2. There are two things in such an imposition; first, the practice of things imposed; secondly the judgment of them that impose them. The former alone belongs unto them who are imposed on; and they may submit unto it, without a compliance with the doctrine, as many did in the apostles' days. For the judgment of the imposers, it was their own error and concernment only.

3. Why is not the imposing of things indifferent, so as to make the observation of them necessary unto men's temporal salvation in this world, so as that the refusal of it shall really affect the refusers with trouble and ruin, as just a cause of separation, as the imposing of them as necessary unto eternal salvation, which shall never affect them?

4. This making things indifferent necessary unto salvation, and as such imposing of them on others, is a thing impossible, that never was, nor ever can be. For it is the judgment of the imposers that is spoken of, and to judge things indifferent in themselves, to be in themselves necessary to salvation, is a contradiction. If only the judgment of the imposers, that such things are not indifferent but necessary to salvation, be intended, and otherwise the things themselves may lawfully be imposed, I know not how this differs from the imposition of indifferent things, under any other pretence.

In his following discourse concerning miscarriages in churches, where no separation is enjoined, we are not at all concerned, and therefore shall not observe the mistakes in it, which are not a few.

But may there not be other causes of peaceable withdrawing from the communion of a church, besides these here enumerated?

1. Suppose a church should impose the observation of Judaical ceremonies, and make their observation necessary,

though not to salvation, yet unto the order and decency of divine worship; it may declare them to be in themselves indifferent; but yet make them necessary to be observed. Or,

2. Suppose a church should be so degenerated in the life and conversation of all its members, that being immersed in various sins, they should have only a form of godliness, but deny the power of it; the rule of the apostle being to avoid and turn away from them.

3. Suppose a church be fallen into such decays in faith, love, and fruits of charity, as that the Lord Jesus Christ by his word, declares his disapprobation of it, and in that state refuses to reform itself, and persecutes them who would reform themselves; Or,

4. Suppose the ministry of any church be such as is insufficient and unable to dispense the word and sacraments unto edification, so as that the whole church may perish as unto any relief by or from the administration of the ordinances of the gospel; I say, in these and such other cases, a peaceable withdrawing from the communion of such churches, is warrantable by the rule of the Scripture.

SECT. III.

The third part of the doctor's discourse he designs to examine the pleas, as he speaks, for separation. And these he refers to four heads, whereof the first respects the constitution of the church. And those which relate hereunto are four also.

1. That parochial churches are not of Christ's institution.

2. That diocesan churches are unlawful.

3. That our national church hath no foundation.

4. That the people are deprived of their right in the choice of their pastors.

The first of these, namely, that our parochial churches are not of Christ's institution, he begins withal, and therein I am alone called to an account. I wonder the doctor

should thus state the question between us. The meaning of this assertion, that our parochial churches are not of Christ's institution, must be either, they are not so because they are parochial, or at least in that they are parochial. But is this my judgment; have I said any thing to this purpose? yea, he knows full well, that in my judgment there are no churches directly of divine institution, but those that are parochial or particular churches. We are not therefore to expect much in the ensuing disputation, when the state of the question is so mistaken at the entrance.

If he say, or intend, that there are many things in their parochial churches observed, practised, and imposed on all their members, in and about the worship of God, which are not of divine institution, we grant it to be our judgment, and part of our plea in this case. But this is not at all spoken unto.

Wherefore the greatest part of the ensuing discourse on this head, is spent in perpetual diversions from the state of the case under consideration, with an attempt to take advantage for some reflections, or an appearance of success, from some passages and expressions, belonging nothing at all unto the merit of the cause; a course which I thought so learned a person would not have taken, in a case wherein conscience is so nearly concerned.

Some mistakes occurring in it, have been already rectified; as that wherein he supposeth that my judgment is for the democratical government of the church; as also what he allegeth in the denial of the gradual declension of the primitive churches from their first original institution, hath been examined.

I shall therefore plainly and directly propose the things which I assert and maintain in this part of the controversy, and then consider what occurs in opposition unto them, or otherwise seems to be of any force towards the end in general of charging us with schism; and they are these that follow.

1. Particular churches or congregations, with their order and rule, are of divine institution, and are sufficient unto all the ends of evangelical churches. I take churches and congregations in the same sense and notion as the church of England doth, defining the church by a congregation of

believers; otherwise there may be occasional congregations that are not stated churches.

2. Unto these churches, there is committed by Christ himself, all the ordinary power and privileges that belong unto any church under the gospel, and of them is required the observance of all church duties which it is their sin to omit.

3. There is no church of any other form, kind, nature, or constitution, that is of divine institution. Things may be variously ordered in and amongst Christians; or their societies may be cast, or disposed of, into such respective relations to, and dependance on one another, in compliance with the political state, and other circumstances of times and places, as may be thought to tend unto their advantage. That which we affirm is, that no alteration of their state from the nature and kind of particular churches is of divine institution.

4. Such churches whose frame, constitution, and power, are destructive of the order, liberty, power, privileges, and duties of particular churches, are so far contrary unto divine institution, and not to be complied withal.

Hereon we affirm, that whereas we are excluded from total communion in our parochial assemblies, by the imposition of things unto us unlawful and sinful, as indispensable conditions of their communion, and cannot comply with them in their rule and worship on the reasons before alleged, it is part of the duty we owe to Jesus Christ, to gather ourselves into particular churches or congregations, for the celebration of divine worship, and the observation, doing, or performance of all his commands. These are the things which in this case we adhere unto, and which must all of them be overthrown, before any colour can be given unto any charge of schism against us, and what is spoken unto this purpose in the doctor's discourse, we shall now consider. Only I desire the reader to remember, that all these principles or assertions are fully confirmed in the preceeding discourse.

That which first occurs in the treatise under consideration unto the point in hand, is the exception put in unto a passage in my former discourse, which is as follows:

'We do not say that because communion in ordinances should be only in such churches as Christ hath instituted,

that therefore it is lawful and necessary to separate from parochial churches; but if it be on other grounds necessary so to separate or withhold communion from them, it is the duty of them that do so to join themselves in or unto some other particular congregation.'

I have not observed any occasion wherein the doctor is more vehement in his rhetoric, than he is on that of this passage, which yet appears to me to be good sense and innocent.

1. Hereunto he says, (1.) p. 221. 'That this is either not to the business, or it is a plain giving up the cause of independency.' If he judge that it is not to the business, I cannot help it, and he might, as I suppose, have done well to have taken no notice of it; as I have dealt with many passages in his discourse. But if it 'be a giving up of the cause of independency,' I say, whatever that be, let whoso will take it, and dispose of it as it seems good unto them: but in proof hereof he says,

(1.) 'Wherefore did the dissenting brethren so much insist upon their separate congregations, when not one of the things now particularly alleged against our church was required of them?'

I answer,

(1.) If any did in those times plead for separate congregations, let them answer for themselves, I was none of them. They did indeed plead for distinct congregations, exempt in some few things from a penal rule, then endeavoured by some to be imposed on all. But there was no such difference nor restraint of communion between any of them, as it is at present between us and parochial churches.

(2.) It is very possible that there may be other reasons of forbearing a conjunction in some acts of church-rule, which was all that was pleaded for by the dissenting brethren, than those which are alleged against total communion with parochial churches in worship, order, and discipline.

2. He adds, secondly, 'But if he insists on those things common to our church with other reformed churches, then they are such things as he supposes contrary to the first institution of churches,' &c.

I fear I do not well understand what this means, nor

what it tends unto, but according as I apprehend the sense of it, I say,

(1.) I insist principally on such things as are not common unto them with other reformed churches, but such as are peculiar unto the church of England. These vary the terms and practice of our communion, between them and it.

(2.) The things we except against in parochial churches, are not contrary to their first institution as parochial, which as hath been proved is the only kind of churches that is of divine institution; but are contrary unto what is instituted to be done and observed in such churches; which one observation makes void all that he would infer from the present suppositions; as,

3. He inquireth hereon, 'What difference there is between separating from our churches, because communion in ordinances is only to be enjoyed in such churches as Christ hath instituted, and separating from them, because they have things repugnant unto the first institution of churches.'

The doctor, I fear, would call this sophistry in another, or at least complain that it is somewhat oddly and faintly expressed. But we shall consider it as it is.

(1.) Separation from parochial churches, because communion in ordinances is only to be enjoyed in such churches as Christ hath instituted, is denied by us; it is so in the assertion opposed by him; and I do not know whether it be laid down by him, as that which we affirm or which we deny.

(2.) There is great ambiguity in the latter clause; of 'separating from them, because they have things repugnant unto the first institution of churches.' For it is one thing to separate from a church because it is not of divine institution, that is, not of that kind of churches which are divinely instituted, and another to do so, because of things practised and imposed in it contrary to divine institution, which is the case in hand.

4. But he after saith, 'Is not this the primary reason of separation, because Christ hath appointed unalterable rules for the government of his church, which are not to be observed in parochial churches?'

I answer no, it is not so, for there may be an omission,

at least for a season, in some churches, of some rules that Christ hath appointed in the government of his church (and we judge his rules as unto right unalterable), which may not be a just cause of separation. So the church of the Jews continued a long time in the omission of the observance of the feast of tabernacles. But the principal reason of the separation we defend is, the practising and imposing of sundry things in the worship of the church not of divine institution, yea, in our judgment contrary thereunto, and the framing of a rule of government of men's devising, to be laid on all the members of them; this is the primary cause pleaded herein.

But because the doctor proposeth a case on those suppositions, whereon he seems to lay great weight, though indeed, however it be determined, it conduceth nothing unto his end, but argues only some keenness of spirit against them whom he opposeth, I shall at large transcribe the whole of it.

'Let us then,' saith he, '(1.) suppose that Christ hath by unalterable rules appointed that a church shall consist only of such a number of men as may meet in one congregation so qualified; and that those by entering into covenant with each other,' (whereof we shall treat hereafter) 'become a church and choose their officers, who are to teach and admonish and administer sacraments, and to exercise discipline by the consent of the congregation. And let us, (2.) suppose such a church not yet gathered, but there lies fit matter for it dispersed up and down in several parishes. (3.) Let us suppose Dr. Owen about to gather such a church. (4.) Let us suppose not one thing peculiar to our church, required of these members, neither the aerial sign of the cross, nor kneeling at the communion, &c. I desire to know whether Dr. Owen be not bound by this unalterable rule, to draw these members from communion with parochial churches on purpose that they might form a congregational church according to Christ's institution? Either then he must quit these unalterable rules and institutions of Christ,' (which he will never do whilst he lives) 'or he must acknowledge, that setting up a congregational church, is the primary ground of this separation from our parochial churches,' &c.

The whole design hereof is to prove, that we do not with-

hold communion from their parochial assemblies, because of the things that are practised and imposed in them in the worship of God and church-rule; but because of a necessity apprehended of setting up congregational churches. I answer,

1. We know it is otherwise, and that we plead the true reason and that which our consciences are regulated by, in refraining from their communion; and it is in vain for him or any man else to endeavour so to birdlime our understandings by a multiplicity of questions, as to make us think we do not judge what we do judge, or do not do what we know ourselves well enough to do. If we cannot answer sophisms against motion, we can yet rise up and walk.

2. These things are consistent, and are not capable of being opposed one to the other; namely, that we refrain communion on the reasons alleged, and thereon judge it necessary to erect congregational churches; which we should have no occasion to do, were not we excluded from communion in parochial assemblies, as we are.

3. The case being put unto me, I answer plainly unto the doctor's last supposition whereon the whole depends, that if those things which we except against, as being unduly practised and imposed in parochial assemblies, were removed and taken away, I would hold communion with them, all the communion that any one is obliged to hold with any church, and would in nothing separate from them. This spoils the whole case. But then he will say, I am no Independent: I cannot help that, he may judge as he sees cause; for I am 'nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri,' designing to be the disciple of Christ alone.

4. But yet suppose that in such churches all the things excepted against being removed, there is yet a defect in some unalterable rule, that concerns the government of the churches, that they answer not in all things the strictness laid down in the doctor's first supposition (although it is certain, that if not all of them absolutely, yet the most of them, and of the most importance, would be found virtually in parochial assemblies, upon the removal of the things excepted against), the inquiry is, what I would do then, or whether I would not set up a congregational church, gathered out of other churches. I answer, I tell you plainly what I would do.

(1.) If I were joined unto any such church, as wherein there were a defect in any of the rules appointed by Christ for its order and government, I would endeavour peaceably, according as the duties of my state and calling did require, to introduce the practice and observance of them.

(2.) In case I could not prevail therein, I would consider whether the want of the things supposed, were such, as to put me on the practice of any thing unlawful, or cut me short of the necessary means of edification; and if I found they do not so do, I would never for such defects separate or withdraw communion from such a church. But,

5. Suppose that from these defects should arise not only a real obstruction unto edification, but also a necessity of practising some things unlawful to be observed, wherein no forbearance could be allowed, I would not condemn such a church, I would not separate from it, would not withdraw from acts of communion with it, which were lawful; but I would peaceably join in fixed personal communion with such a church as is free from such defects; and if this cannot be done without the gathering of a new church, I see neither schism nor separation in so doing. Wherefore, notwithstanding all the doctor's questions and his case founded on as many suppositions as he was pleased to make, it abides firm and unshaken, that the ground and reason of our refraining communion from parochial assemblies, is the practice and imposition of things not lawful for us to observe in them. And it is unduly affirmed, p. 223. that upon my grounds, 'Separation is necessary, not from the particular conditions of communion with them, but because parochial churches are not formed after the congregational way.' For what form of churches they have, be it what it will, it is after the congregational way. And it is more unduly affirmed, and contrary unto the rules of Christian charity, that this plea of ours is a necessary piece of art to keep fair with the Presbyterian party. For as we design to keep fair, as it is called, with no parties, but only so far as truth and Christian love require, and so we design it with all parties whatsoever; so the plea hath been always insisted on by us, and was the cause of nonconformity in multitudes of our persuasion, before they had any opportunity to gather any congregational churches according to the rule of the

gospel. Such things will never help nor adorn any cause in the issue.

But he presseth the due consideration of this art (that, as I suppose, they may avoid the snare of it), on the Presbyterians, by minding them what was done in former times, 'in the debate of the dissenting brethren, and the setting up of congregational churches in those days.' For saith he, 'Have those of the congregational way since altered their judgment? Hath Dr. Owen yielded, that in case some terms of communion in our church were not insisted on, they would give over separation? Were not their churches first gathered out of Presbyterian congregations; and if presbytery had been settled upon the king's restoration, would they not have continued in their separation?'

Ans. 1. There is no difference that I know of, between Presbyterians and those whom he calls independents, about particular churches. For the Presbyterians allow them to be of divine institution; grant them the exercise of discipline, by their own eldership in all ordinary cases, and none to be exercised in them, without them or their own consent, as also their right unto the choice of their own officers; so that there could be no separation between them on that account.

2. When they begin in good earnest to reform themselves, and to take away the unsufferable conditions of communion excepted against, they may know more of my judgment if I am alive (which I do not believe I shall be), as unto separation; though I have spoken unto it plainly enough already.

3. It cannot be said, that the churches of the Independents were gathered out of Presbyterian churches, for the Presbyterian government was never here established; and each party took liberty to reform themselves according to their principles, wherein there was some difference.

4. Had the Presbyterian government been settled at the king's restoration, by the encouragement and protection of the practice of it, without a rigorous imposition of every thing supposed by any to belong thereunto, or a mixture of human constitutions, if there had any appearance of a schism or separation continued between the parties, I do judge they would have been both to blame. For as it can-

not be expected that all churches, and all persons in them, should agree in all principles and practices belonging unto church-order, nor was it so in the days of the apostles, nor ever since among any true churches of Christ; so all the fundamental principles of church communion would have been so fixed and agreed upon between them, and all offences in worship so removed, as that it would have been a matter of no great art absolutely to unite them, or to maintain a firm communion among them, no more than in the days of the apostles and the primitive times, in reference to the differences that were among churches in those days. For they allowed distinct communion upon distinct apprehensions of things belonging unto church-order or worship, all keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. If it shall be asked then, why did they not formerly agree in the assembly? I answer, (1.) I was none of them, and cannot tell. (2.) They did agree in my judgment well enough, if they could have thought so; and farther I am not concerned in the difference.

It is therefore notorious, that occasion is given unto our refraining free communion with parochial churches by the unwarrantable imposition of things, not lawful for us to observe, both in church-order and worship; nor is it candid in any to deny it, though they are otherwise minded as unto the things themselves.

His second exception is unto a saying which I quoted out of justice Hobart's reports, who saith, 'We know well that the primitive church in its greatest purity was but voluntary congregations of believers, submitting themselves to the apostles and other pastors, to whom they did minister of their temporals as God did move them.' Hereunto, with a reflection on a dead man, I know not why, he replies, that this is 'not to the purpose, or rather, quite overthrows my hypothesis.' But why so? He will prove it with two arguments.

The first is this, 'Those voluntary congregations over which the apostles were set, were no limited congregations of any one particular church; but those congregations over which the apostles were set are those of which justice Hobart speaks, and therefore it is plain he spake of all the

churches which were under the care of the apostles, which he calls voluntary congregations.'

Ans. 1. Whereas this argument seems to be cast into the form of a syllogism, I could easily manifest how asyllogistical it is, did I delight to contend with him or any else. But,

2. The conclusion which he infers is directly what I plead for, namely, that all the churches under the care of the apostles were voluntary congregations.

3. There is a fallacy in that expression, 'no limited congregations of any one particular church;' no such thing is pretended, but particular churches are congregations. Such were all the churches over which the apostles were set, and therefore justice Hobart speaks of them all. This then is that which he seems to oppose, namely, that all the churches under the care of the apostles were particular voluntary congregations, as justice Hobart affirms, and this is that which, in the close, he seems to grant.

His second argument, which is no less ambiguous, no less a rope of sand than the former, is this, 'Those voluntary congregations over whom the apostles appointed pastors after their decease, were no particular congregations in one city. But those of whom justice Hobart speaks were such, for he saith they first submitted unto the apostles and afterward to other pastors.' What then? Why 'justice Hobart could not be such a stranger to antiquity as to believe that the Christians in the age after the apostles, amounted but to one congregation in a city.'

Ans. 1. What this is designed to prove, or disprove, or how it doth either of them I do not understand; but I deny the proposition. 'The voluntary congregations over whom the apostles appointed pastors were all of them particular congregations,' either in one city or more cities, for that is nothing unto our purpose.

2. Not to engage justice Hobart or his honour, I do confess myself such a stranger unto antiquity (if that may be esteemed the reason of it), as not to believe that the Christians in the age after the apostles amounted to any more than one church or congregation in a city; and shall acknowledge myself beholden to this reverend author, if he

will give me one undoubted instance where they so did. Only let the reader observe, that I intend not occasional meetings of any of the church with or without their elders, which were frequent; they met in those days, in fields, in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, in burying places, in houses hired or borrowed, in upper rooms, or cellars, whereof a large story might easily be given, if it were to our present purpose. Dionysius of Alexandria sums them up briefly χώριον, ἀγρὸι, ἐρημία, ναῦς, πανδοχεῖον δεσμωτήριον, a field, a desert, a ship, an inn, a prison, were places of our meetings; Euseb. lib. 7. cap. 22. but I speak of stated churches with their worship, power, order, and rule. But whether there were more such churches in any one city is a matter of fact that shall be immediately inquired into. All that I here assert and confirm from the words of justice Hobart is, that the churches in the days of the apostles were particular voluntary congregations. And the doctor will find it a difficult task to prove that this overthrows my hypothesis.

Our author in the next place opposeth what I affirmed of the gradual deviation of the churches after the apostles from the rule of their first institution; which hath been already accounted for.

Sect. 4. p. 224. Upon an occasional expression of mine, about the church of Carthage in Cyprian's time, he gives us a large account of the state of the church of Carthage at that time, wherein we are not much concerned. My words are, Vindic. p. 41. [vol. xix. p. 604.] 'Though many alterations were before that time introduced into the order and rule of the churches, yet it appears that when Cyprian was bishop of the church of Carthage, that the whole community of the members of that church did meet together to determine of things that were of their common interest, according unto what was judged to be their right and liberty in those days.'

I thought no man who is so conversant in the writings of Cyprian as our author apparently is, could have denied the truth hereof, nor do I say it is so done by him; only he takes occasion from hence to discourse at large concerning the state of the church at Carthage in those days, in opposition to Mr. Cotton, who affirms that there was found in that church the 'express and lively lineaments of the very

body of congregational discipline.' Herein I am not concerned, who do grant that at that time there were many alterations introduced into the order and rule of the church; but that the people did meet together unto the determination of things of their common interest, such as were the choice of their officers, and the readmission of them into the fellowship of the church who had fallen through infirmity in time of persecution, or public offences and divisions, is so evident in the writings of Cyprian, wherein he ascribes unto them the right of choosing worthy, and of rejecting unworthy officers, and tells them that in such cases he will do nothing without their consent, that it cannot be gainsayed. But hereon he asketh, where I had any reason to appeal to St. Cyprian for the democratical government of the church; which indeed I did not do, nor any thing which looked like unto it: and he adds, that they have this advantage from the appeal, that we do not suppose any deviation then from the primitive institution, whereas my words are positive, that before that time there were many alterations introduced into the rule and order of the church; such things will partiality in a cause, and aiming at success in disputation, produce.

Mr. Cotton affirms, that the lineaments of the congregational discipline are found in that church; that there is therein a just representation of an episcopal church; that is, I presume, diocesan, because that alone is unto his purpose. It is not lawful to make any church after the time of the apostles the rule of all church-state and order; nor yet to be absolutely determined in these things by the authority of any man not divinely inspired, and yet I cannot but wish that all the three parties dissenting about church-order, rule, and worship, would attempt an agreement between themselves, upon the representation made of the state of the church of Carthage in the days of Cyprian (which all of them lay some claim unto), although it will be an abridgment of some of their pretensions. It might bring them all nearer together, and, it may be, all of them in some things nearer to the truth: for it is certain,

1. That the church of Carthage was at that time a particular church. There was no more church but one in that city. Many occasional meetings and assemblies in several

places for divine exercises and worship there were. But stated churches with officers of their own, members peculiarly belonging unto them, discipline among them, such as our reverend author doth afterward affirm and describe our parochial churches to be, there were none, nor is it pretended that there were.

2. That in this one church there were many presbyters or elders, who ruled the whole body or community of it by common advice and counsel, whether they were all of them such as laboured in the word and doctrine, with the administration of the sacraments, or attended unto rule only, it doth not appear but that they were many, and such as did not stand in any peculiar relation unto any part of the people, but concurred in common to promote the edification of the whole body, as occasion and opportunity did require, is evident in the account given of them by Cyprian himself.

3. That among those elders, in that one church, there was one peculiarly called the bishop, who did constantly preside amongst them in all church affairs, and without whom ordinarily nothing was done, as neither did he any thing, without the advice of the elders and consent of the people. How far this may be allowed for order's sake is worth consideration; of divine institution it is not. But where there are many elders, who have equal interest in, and right unto, the rule of the whole church and the administration of all ordinances, it is necessary unto order, that one do preside in their meetings and consultations, whom custom gave some pre-eminence unto.

4. That the people were ruled by their own consent, and that in things of greatest importance, as the choice of their officers, the casting out and the receiving in of lapsed members, had their suffrage in the determination of them.

5. That there was no imposition of liturgies, or ceremonies, or any human invention in the worship of God, on the church or any members of it, the Scripture being the sole acknowledged rule in discipline and worship.

This was the state and order of the church of Carthage in those days, and although there were some alterations in it from the first divine institution of churches, yet I heartily wish that there were no more difference amongst us, than what would remain upon a supposition of this state.

For what remains of the opposition made unto what I had asserted concerning congregational or particular churches, I may refer the doctor and the reader unto what hath been farther pleaded concerning them in the preceding discourse, nor am I satisfied that he hath given any sufficient answer unto what was before alleged in the vindication, but hath passed by what was most pregnant with evidence unto the truth, and by a mistake of my mind or words diverts very much from the state of the question, which is no other but what I laid down before; yet I will consider what is material in the whole of his discourse on this subject.

Sect. 5. p. 234. He says, I affirm that as to the 'matter of fact concerning the institution of congregational churches, it seems evidently exemplified in the Scripture;' for which I refer the reader unto what is now again declared in the confirmation of it. And he adds, 'The matter of fact is that when churches grew too big for one single congregation in a city, then a new congregational church was set up under new officers, with a separate power of government,' that is, in that city. But this is not at all the matter of fact. I do not say that there were originally more particular churches than one in one city; I do grant, in the words next quoted by him, that there is not express mention made, that any such church did divide itself into more congregations with new officers. But this is the matter of fact, that the apostles appointed only particular congregations, and that therefore they did not oblige the Christians about in a province or diocess to be of that church which was first erected in any town or city, but they founded new churches, with new officers of their own, in all places where there were a sufficient number of believers to make up such a church. And this I prove from the instance of the church of Jerusalem, which was first planted; but quickly after there were churches gathered and settled in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. They planted churches, κατὰ πόλεις καὶ χώρας, in the cities and villages, as Clemens speaks. But what, saith he, is this to the proof of the congregational way? this it is, namely, that the churches instituted by the apostles were all of them congregational, not diocesan, provincial or national; but saith he, 'the thing I desired was, that when

the Christians in one city multiplied into more congregations, they would prove that they did make new and distinct churches.' He may desire it of them who grant that the Christians did multiply in one city into more congregations than one (which I deny), until the end of the second century; although they might and did occasionally meet, especially in times of persecution, in distinct assemblies. Neither will their multiplication into more congregations, without distinct officers, at all help the cause he pleadeth for; for his diocesan church consisteth of many distinct churches with their distinct officers, order, and power, as he afterward describes our parishes to do under one bishop. Yet such is his apprehension of the justice of his cause, that what hath been pleaded twenty times against it, namely, that speaking of one city, the Scripture still calls it the church of that place; but speaking of a province, as Judea, Galilee, Samaria, Galatia, Macedonia, it speaks of the churches of them, which evidently proves, that it knows nothing of a diocesan, provincial, or national church; he produceth in the justification of it, because he saith, 'that it is evident then, that there was but one church in one city, which was never denied. There were indeed then many bishops in one church; Phil. i. 1. Acts xx. 28. And afterward when one church had one bishop only, yet there were two bishops in one city, which requires two churches, as Epiphanius affirms, *οὐ γὰρ πότε ἡ Ἀλεξανδρεία δύο ἐπισκόπους ἔσχεν ὡς αἱ ἄλλαι πόλεις.* Hæres. 68. s. 6.

'For Alexandria never had two bishops as other cities had.' Whether he intend two bishops in one church, or two churches in one city, all is one to our purpose.

But the doctor, I presume, makes this observation rather artificially to prevent an objection against his main hypothesis, than with any design to strengthen it thereby. For he cannot but know how frequently it is pleaded in opposition unto any national church-state, as unto its mention in the Scripture. For he that shall speak of the churches, in Essex, Suffolk, Hertfordshire, and so of other counties, without the least intimation of any general church unto which they should belong, would be judged to speak rather the independent than the episcopal dialect.

But, saith he, p. 236. 'I cannot but wonder what Dr. Owen

means, when after he hath produced the evidence of distinct churches in the same province, he calls this plain Scripture evidence and practice for the erecting particular distinct congregations; 'who denies that?' (I say then, it is incumbent on him to prove, if he do any thing in this cause, that they erected churches of another sort, kind, and order also.) 'But,' saith he, 'I see nothing like a proof of distinct churches in the same city, which was the thing to be proved, but because it could not be proved, was prudently let alone.'

But this was not the thing to be proved, nor did I propose it to confirmation, nor assert it, but have proved the contrary unto the end of the second century. This only I assert, that every church in one city was only one church; and nothing is offered by the doctor to the contrary, yea, he affirms the same.

But, saith he, sect. 6. p. 237. 'Dr. Owen saith, That the Christians of one city might not exceed the bounds of a particular church or congregation, no, although they had a multiplication of bishops or elders in them, and occasional distinct assemblies for some acts of divine worship. But then,' saith he, 'the notion of a church is not limited in the Scripture to a single congregation.' Why so; for, saith he, if occasional assemblies be allowed for some acts of worship, why not for others? I say, because they belong unto the whole church, or are acts of communion in the whole church assembled, and so cannot be observed in occasional meetings; do this, saith the apostle, 'when you come together in one place.' 'And if,' saith he, 'the number of elders be unlimited, then every of those may attend the occasional distinct assemblies for worship, and yet altogether make up the body of one church,' and so say I, they may, and yet be one church still joining together in all acts of communion, that are proper and peculiar unto the church. For as the meetings intended were occasional, so also was the attendance of the elders unto them, as they found occasion, for the edification of the whole church.

It may be the doctor is not so well acquainted with the principles and practice of the congregational way, and therefore thinks that these things are contrary unto them. But those of that way do maintain that there ought to be

in every particular congregation, unto the completeness of it, many elders or overseers; that the number of them ought to be increased, as the increase of the church makes it necessary for their edification, that the members of such a church may and ought to meet occasionally in distinct assemblies, especially in the time of persecution, for prayer, preaching of the word, and mutual exhortation; so when Peter was in prison after the death of James, many met together in the house of Mary to pray; Acts xii. 12. which was not a meeting of the whole church. And that there were such private meetings, of the members of the same church in times of persecution, among the primitive churches, may be proved by a multiplication of instances; but still they continued one church, and joined together in all acts of church communion properly so called, especially if it were possible every Lord's day, as Justin Martyr declares that the church did in his time. For all the Christians, saith he, then, in the city and villages about, gathered together in one place for the ends mentioned. But still these distinct occasional assemblies did not constitute any distinct societies or corporations, as the distinct companies do in a city. 'But,' saith he, 'grant one single bishop over all these elders, and they make up that representation of a church, which we have from the best and purest antiquity.' I say we would quickly grant it, could we see any warrant for it, or if he could prove that so it was from the beginning. However, this is no part of our present contest, namely, whether some while after the days of the apostles, in churches that were greatly increased, and many elders in them, there was not one chosen (as at Alexandria), by those elders themselves, to preside among them, who in a peculiar manner was called a bishop. But, if I mistake not, that alone which would advantage his cause is to prove, that there were in one city, or any where else, many, not occasional assemblies of Christians or church members, but many stated, fixed churches, with officers of their own, peculiarly related unto them, entrusted with church power and privileges, at least as much as he afterward pleads to be in our parochial churches, all under the government of one single bishop, making up a new church-state beyond that of particular congregations, by their relation unto him as

their common pastor. This, I take it, is that which should have been proved.

All the difficulty wherewith our assertion is accompanied, ariseth from the multiplication of believers, and the increase of churches, in the apostles' time or presently after. For this seems to be so great, as that those in one city could not continue in one church, notwithstanding the advantages of occasional assemblies. The church of Jerusalem had five thousand in it at the same time; the word grew and prevailed at Ephesus and other places; whereto I shall briefly answer as hastening unto a close of this unpleasing labour. I say, therefore,

1. Whatever difficulty may seem to be in this matter, yet in point of fact, so it was; there was no church before the end of the second century of any other species, nature, or kind, but a particular congregational church only, as hath been proved before; let any one instance be produced of a church of one denomination, national, provincial, or diocesan, or of any other kind than that which is congregational, and I will give over this contest. But when a matter of fact is certain, it is too late to inquire how it might be. And on this occasion I shall add, that if in that space of time, namely, before the end of the second century, any proof or undoubted testimony can be produced, of the imposition of the necessary use of liturgies, or of stated ceremonies of the practice of church discipline consistent with that now in use in the church of England, it will go a great way in the determination of the whole controversy between us.

2. The admirable prevalency of the gospel in those days, consisted principally in its spreading itself all the world over, and planting seminaries for farther conversions in all nations. It did indeed prevail more in some cities and towns than in others; in some places many were converted, in others the tender of it was utterly rejected; howbeit it prevailed not unto the gathering of such great numbers into any church solely, as might destroy, or be inconsistent with its congregational institution. For not all, not, it may be, half, not sometimes a third part, of them who made some profession of the truth, and attended unto the preaching of the word, and many of whom underwent martyrdom, were

admitted as complete members of the church, unto all the parts of its communion. Hence there were many who upon a general account were esteemed Christians, and that justly, where the churches were but small.

3. It doth not appear that in the next age after the apostles, the churches were any where so increased in number as to bear the least proportion with the inhabitants of the cities and towns wherein they were. The church of Smyrna in the days of Polycarpus may justly be esteemed one of the greatest in those days, both from the eminency of the place and person who was justly accounted the great instructor of all Asia, as they called him when he was carried unto the stake. But this church giveth such an account of itself in its epistle unto the churches of Pontus about the martyrdom of Polycarpus, as manifest the church there to have been a very small number, in comparison of the multitude of the other inhabitants, so as that it was scarcely known who or what they were; Euseb. lib. 4. cap. 15. So in the excellent epistle of the churches of Vienna and Lyons, unto the churches of Asia and Phrygia, concerning the persecutions that befell them, as they declare themselves to have been particular churches only, so they make it evident that they bore in number no proportion unto the inhabitants of the places where they were, who could scarce discover them by the most diligent search. Euseb. lib. 5. cap. 1.

4. As for the church of Jerusalem in particular, notwithstanding the great number of its original converts, who probably were many of them strangers occasionally present at the feast of Pentecost, and there instructed in the knowledge of the truth, that they might in the several countries whither they immediately returned be instruments of the propagation of the gospel, it is certain that many years after it consisted of no greater multitude than could come together in one place, to the management of church affairs; Acts xv. 20, 21. Nor is it likely that Pella, an obscure place, whose name probably had never been known but on this occasion, was like to receive any great multitudes; nor doth Epiphanius say, as our author pretends, that they spread themselves from thence to Cœlosyria and Decapolis and Basanitis. For he affirms expressly, that all the disciples which went from Je-

rusalem dwelt at Pella. Only he says, that from thence the sect of the Nazarenes took its original, which spread itself (afterward) in Cœlosyria, Decapolis, and Basanitis. Ἐκεῖθεν γὰρ, ἡ ἀρχὴ γέγονε (speaking of that sect) μετὰ τὴν ἀπὸ τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων μετάστησιν; πάντων τῶν μαθητῶν ἐν Πέλλῃ οἰκησάντων; they dwelled all at Pella.

Sect. 7. p. 239. He quotes another saying of mine, namely, that I 'cannot discern the least necessity of any positive rule or direction in this matter, seeing the nature of the thing, and the duty of man, doth indispensably require it.' And hereon he attempts to make advantage, in opposition unto another saying, as he supposeth, of mine; namely, 'that the institution of churches, and the rules for their disposal and government throughout the world are the same, stated and unalterable;' from whence he makes many inferences to countenance him in his charge of schism. But why should we contend fruitlessly about these things? had he been pleased to read a little farther on the same page, he would have seen that I affirm the institution itself to be a plain command, which, considering the nature of the duties required of men in church relation, is sufficient to oblige them thereunto, without any new revelation unto that purpose, which renders all his queries, exceptions, and inferences, of no use. For I do not speak in that place of the original institution of churches whose laws and rules are universal and unalterable, but our actual gathering into particular churches, for which I say the necessity of duty is our warrant, and the institution itself a command. No great advantage will be made any way of such attempts.

The like I must say of his following discourse, p. 241. concerning churches in private families, wherewith I am dismissed. I do grant that a church may be in a family. There was so in the family of Abraham before the law. And if a family do consist of such numbers as may constitute a church meet for the duties required of it, and the privileges intrusted with it; if it hath persons in it furnished with gifts and graces fit for the ministerial office, and they be lawfully called and set apart thereunto, I see no reason why they should not be a church, although they should be all in the same family. But what is this to the imprisoning of all religious worship

in private families, that never were churches, nor can so be, with the admission of some other which our author would justify from this concession, I know not. But it is easy to see what our condition should always be, if some men's power did answer their desires.

But the will of God be done.

I shall not farther concern myself to consider things charged but not proved, repeated but not confirmed, depending on a misunderstanding, or misapprehension of words, wherein the merit of the cause is not concerned.

That which I first undertook was a vindication of the nonconformists from the charge of the guilt of schism. And this I engaged in for no other reason, but to remove, as far as in me lay, the obstruction that seemed to be cast by the doctor's sermon unto the uniting of all Protestants in the same common interest against popery. For although the design might be good, as I hope it was, and he might judge well of the seasonableness of what he proprosed unto its end; yet we found it (it may be from the circumstances of it, as unto time and place) to be of a contrary tendency, to the raising of new disputes, creating of new jealousies, and weakening the hands of multitudes, who were ready and willing to join entirely in opposition unto popery, and the defence of the Protestant religion. For if a party of soldiers (as the doctor more than once alludes unto that sort of men) should be drawing up in a field, with others, to oppose a common enemy, some persons of great authority and command in the army should go unto them, and declare that they were not to be trusted, that they themselves were traitors and enemies, fit to be destroyed when the common enemy was dispatched or reconciled, it would certainly abate of their courage and resolution in what they were undertaking, with no less hazard, than any others in the army.

I have here again unto the same end vindicated the principles of the former vindication, with what brevity I could. For the truth is, I meet with nothing material in the doctor's large discourse as unto what he chargeth on those of the congregational persuasion, but what is obviated in the foregoing treatise. And if any thing of the same nature be farther offered in opposition unto the same principles, it shall (if God

give life and strength) be considered in and with the second part of it, concerning the matter, form, rule, polity, offices, officers, and order of evangelical churches, which is designed; and it is designed not for strife and contention with any, which if it be possible, and as far as in me lieth, I shall always avoid, but for the edification of them by whom it is desired.

THE

TRUE NATURE

OF

A GOSPEL CHURCH

AND

ITS GOVERNMENT:

WHEREIN

THESE FOLLOWING PARTICULARS ARE DISTINCTLY HANDLED:

I. The subject matter of the church—II. The formal cause of a particular church—III. Of the polity, rule, or discipline of the church in general—IV. The officers of the church—V. The duty of pastors of churches—VI. The office of teachers in the church—VII. Of the rule of the church, or of ruling elders—VIII. The nature of church polity or rule, with the duty of elders—IX. Of deacons—X. Of excommunication—XI. Of the communion of churches.

THE

PREFACE TO THE READER.

THE church of Christ, according as it is represented unto us, or described by the Holy Spirit of God, in the Old and New Testament, hath but a twofold consideration, as catholic and mystical; or as visible and organized in particular congregations. The catholic church is the whole mystical body of Christ, consisting of all the elect which are purchased and redeemed by his blood, whether already called or uncalled, militant or triumphant; and this is the church that God gave him to be head unto, which is his body and his fulness, and by union with him Christ mystical; Eph. i. 22, 23. and this is that πανήγυρις (the only word most fully expressing the catholic church, used in Scripture), 'the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven,' Heb. xii. 23. i. e. in the Lamb's book of life, and shall all appear one day gathered together to their head, in the perfection and fulness of the New Jerusalem-state; where they will make a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish. The day of grace which the saints have passed in the respective ages of the church was but the days of its espousals, wherein the bride hath made herself ready; but then will be her full married state unto Christ, then will be the perfection not only of every particular member of Christ, but of the whole body of Christ, called 'a perfect man,' and 'the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,' to which we are called edifying and building up, by the ministry

and ordinances of Christ, whilst we are in 'via,' in our passage unto this country, a city with a more durable fixed foundation, which we seek.

In order therefore unto the completing this great and mystical body, Christ hath his particular visible churches and assemblies in this world, wherein he hath ordained ordinances, and appointed officers for the glorious forementioned ends and purposes.

There is no other sort of visible church of Christ organized, the subject of the aforesaid institutions spoken of, but a particular church or congregation (either in the Old or New Testament), where all the members thereof do ordinarily meet together in one place to hold communion one with another, in some one or more great ordinances of Christ. The first churches were economic, when the worship of God was solemnly performed in the large families of the antediluvian and postdiluvian patriarchs, where, no doubt, all frequently assembled to the sacrifices as then offered, and other parts of worship then in use.

After the descent of a numerous progeny from Abraham's loins, God takes them to himself in one visible body, a national but congregational church, to which he forms them four hundred and thirty years after the promise in the wilderness; and although all Abraham's natural posterity, according to the external part of the promise made to him, were taken into visible church fellowship, so that it became a national church; yet it was such a national church always, in the wilderness, and in the holy land, as was congregational; for it was but one congregation during the tabernacle, or temple-state, first or second; they were always bound to assemble to the tabernacle, or temple, thrice at least every year; hence the tabernacle was still called the tabernacle of the congregation. They were to have but one altar for burnt-offerings and sacrifices;

what others were at any time elsewhere called high places, were condemned by God as sin.

Lastly, when Christ had divorced this people, abolished their Mosaical constitution, by breaking their staff of beauty and their staff of bonds, he erects his gospel church, calls in disciples by his ministry, forms them into a body, furnisheth them with officers and ordinances; and after he had suffered, rose again, and continued here forty days; in which time he frequently appeared to them and acquainted them with his will, ascends unto his Father, sends his Spirit in a plentiful manner at Pentecost, whereby most of them were furnished with all necessary miraculous gifts, to the promoting the glory and interest of Christ among Jews and Gentiles.

Hence the whole evangelical ministry was first placed in the church of Jerusalem (so far as extraordinary, or such a part of it as was to descend to churches of after ages), neither were they placed as abiding or standing officers in any other church, as we find. In this church they acted as the elders thereof, and from this church they were, it is very likely, solemnly sent by fasting and prayer to the exercise of their apostolic function, in preaching, healing, and working miracles, gathering churches, and settling officers in them; even so as Barnabas and Paul were sent forth by the church of Antioch.

Their distinguishing apostolic office and charge (from which the evangelist differed but little) was to take care of all the churches, not to sit down as standing pastors to all, or any particular congregation, but at the first planting, to gather, to direct, and confirm them, in practice of their doctrine, fellowship, breaking bread, and in prayer. Wherefore, this apostolic care committed to them proves nothing either of the catholic authority claimed by an œcumenick pastor, or that

charge of many congregations claimed by diocesan bishops.

Whence it is most evident, that all church officers, so far as they had any pastoral or episcopal office, were given to a particular congregation, as the πρωτὸν δέκτικον. We read of no pastors of many congregations, nor of no church made up of many congregations, to which officers were annexed, nor of any representative church, as some would have.

That apostolic power did descend to successors we utterly deny, it being not derivable; for none after them could say, they had been eye-witnesses of our Lord before or after his resurrection; none since so qualified by an extraordinary measure of the Spirit for preaching and working miracles; and none but the pope challenges such an extensive care for, and power over, all churches. That which descends from them to the ordinary ministry, is a commission to preach and baptize; and why not to head? it being always in the commission that Christ gave, a pastoral relation, or presbytership, which was included in their apostleship, and exercised toward the church of Jerusalem. Such presbytership John and Peter both had. Hence there remains no other successors 'jure' to the apostles, but ordinary pastors and teachers.

These are relative officers, and are always in and to some particular congregations; we know of no catholic visible church that any pastors are ordained to. 1. The Scripture speaks of no church as catholic visible. 2. The thing itself is but a chimera of some men's brains; it is not 'in rerum natura;' for if a catholic visible church be all the churches that I see at a time, I am not capable of seeing much more than what can assemble in one place. And if it be meant of all the churches actually in being, how are they visible to me? where can they be seen in one place? I may as well

call all the cities and corporations in the world the catholic visible city or corporation; which all rational men would call nonsense. Besides, if all organized churches could be got together, it is not catholic in respect of saints militant, much less of triumphant; for many are no church members that are Christ's members, and many visible members are no true members of Christ Jesus. Where is any such church capable of communion in all ordinances in one place? and the Scripture speaks of no other organized visible church.

Again, to a catholic visible church constituted, should be a catholic visible pastor or pastors; for as the church is, such is the pastor and officers; to the mystical church Christ is the mystical head and pastor; he is called the chief Pastor and Shepherd of our souls; 1 Pet. ii. 25. Hence the uncalled are his sheep; as John x. 16. But to all visible churches Christ hath appointed a visible pastor or pastors; and where is the pastor of the catholic visible church? he is not to be found, unless it suffice us to take him from Rome. To say that all individual pastors are pastors to the catholic church, is either to say that they are invested with as much pastoral power and charge in one church as in another, and then they are indefinite pastors; and therefore all pastors have mutual power in each other's churches; and so John may come into Thomas's church and exercise all parts of jurisdiction there, and Thomas into John's; or a minister to the catholic church hath an universal catholic power over the catholic church; if so, the power and charge which every ordinary pastor hath, is apostolic. Or, lastly, he is invested with an arbitrary power, at least, as to the taking up a particular charge where he pleaseth, with a 'non obstante' to the suffrages of the people; for if he hath an office whereby he is equally related to all churches, it

is at his liberty, by virtue of this office, to take where he pleaseth.

But every church-officer, under Christ, is a visible relate, and the correlate must be such, whence the church must be visible to which he is an officer. It is absurd to say a man is a visible husband to an invisible wife, the relate and correlate must be 'ejusdem naturæ.' It is true, Christ is related to the church as mystical head, but it is in respect of the church in its mystical nature, for Christ hath substituted no mystical officers in his church.

There is a great deal of difference between the mystical and external visible church, though the latter is founded upon it, and for the sake of it. It is founded upon it as taking its true spiritual original from it, deriving vital spirits from it by a mystical union to, and communion with, Christ and his members; and it is for the sake of it, all external visible assemblies, ministers, ordinances, are for the sake of the mystical body of Christ, for calling in the elect, and the edifying of them to that full measure of stature they are designed unto.

But the different consideration lies in these things:

1. That the mystical church doth never fail, neither is diminished by any shocks of temptation or suffering that in their visible profession any of them undergo; whereas, visible churches are often broken, scattered, yea, unchurched, and many members fail of the grace of God by final apostacy. Likewise Christ's mystical church is many times preserved in that state only, or mostly, when Christ hath not a visible organized church, according to institution, to be found on the face of the earth; so it was with his church often under the Old Testament dispensation, as in Egypt, in the days of the judges, when the ark was carried away by the Philistines, in the days of Manasseh, and other wicked

kings, and especially in Babylon. In such times the faithful ones were preserved without the true sacrifices, the teaching priest, and the law. So hath it been in the days of the New Testament, in divers places, under the Draconic heathen persecutions; and afterward in the wilderness state of the church, under the anti-christian usurpations and false worship. Which mystical state is the place prepared of God to hide the seed of the woman in, from the dragon's rage, for the space of one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

Again, unto this mystical church is only essentially necessary a mystical union unto the Lord Jesus Christ, by the gift of the Father, acceptation, and covenant undertaking of the Son, the powerful and efficacious work of the Spirit of the Father and the Son, working true saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and sincere love to him and all his true members. Whereby, as they have a firm and unshaken union, so they have a spiritual communion, though without those desirable enjoyments of external church privileges and means of grace, which they are providentially often hindered from; visible churches being but Christ's tents and tabernacles, which he sometimes setteth up, and sometimes takes down and removes at his pleasure, as he sees best for his glory in the world.

But of these he hath a special regard as to their foundation, matter, constitution, and order; he gives forth an exact pattern from mount Zion, as of that typical tabernacle from mount Sinai of old.

The foundation part of a visible church is the credible profession of faith and holiness, wherein the Lord Jesus Christ is the corner-stone; Eph. ii. 20. Matt. xvi. 18. This profession is the foundation, but not the church itself. It is not articles of faith, or profession of them in particular individual persons, that make an organized visible church. We are the household of faith built upon the foundation, &c. 2. It is men and

women, not doctrine, that are the matter of a church; and these professing the faith, and practising holiness. The members of churches are always called in the New Testament, saints, faithful, believers: they were such that were added to the churches; neither is every believer so as such, but as a professing believer; for a man must appear to be fit matter of a visible church before he can challenge church privileges, or they can be allowed him. 3. It is not many professing believers that make a particular church. For though they are fit matter for a church, yet they have not the form of a church without a mutual agreement and combination (explicit, or at least implicit), whereby they become, by virtue of Christ's charter, a spiritual corporation, and are called a city, household, house, being united together by joints and bands, not only by internal bonds of the Spirit, but external; the bonds of union must be visible, as the house is, by profession.

This is a society that Christ hath given power to, to choose a pastor and other officers of Christ's institution, and enjoy all ordinances, the word, sacrament, and prayer, as Christ hath appointed.

Hence a visible church must needs be a separate congregation; separation is a proper and inseparable adjunct thereof; the apostle speaks of church-membership, 2 Cor. vi. 14. 'Be not unequally yoked together (ἑτεροζυγοῦντες, yoked with those of another kind, the ploughing with an ox and ass together, being forbidden under the law) with unbelievers,' ἀπίστοις, i. e. 'visible unbelievers of any sort or kind; for what participation, μετοχὴ, hath righteousness with unrighteousness? what κοινωνία, communion or fellowship, hath light with darkness? ver. 15. τίς δὲ συμφώνησις, what harmony hath Christ with Belial, men of corrupt lives and conversation? or what part, μερὶς πιστῷ μετὰ ἀπίστου, hath a believer, i. e. a visible believer, with an unbeliever? It ought not to be rendered, infidel; but it was

done by our translators, to put a blind upon this place, as to its true intention, and to countenance parish communion; for why did they not here, ver. 14. and every where else, render ἄπιστος, 'an infidel?' ver. 16. τίς δὲ συγκατάθεσις ναῷ Θεοῦ μετὰ εἰδώλων, 'what consistency hath the temple of God (i. e. the gospel church) with idols?' &c. I take this place to be a full proof of what is before spoken, that a gospel church is a company of faithful professing people, walking together by mutual consent, or confederation, to the Lord Jesus Christ and one to another, in subjection to and practice of all his gospel precepts and commands, whereby they are separate from all persons and things manifestly contrary or disagreeing thereunto.

Hence, as it is separate from all such impurities that are without, so Christ hath furnished it with sufficient power and means to keep itself pure; and therefore hath provided ordinances and ministers for that end and purpose; for the great end of church-edification cannot be obtained without purity be also maintained in doctrine and fellowship.

Purity cannot be maintained without order; a disorderly society will corrupt within itself; for by disorder it is divided; by divisions the joints and bands are broken, not only of love and affection, but of visible conjunction; so that roots of bitterness and sensual separation arising, many are defiled.

It is true, there may be a kind of peace and agreement in a society that is a stranger to gospel order, when men agree together to walk according to a false rule, or in a supine and negligent observation of the true rule. There may be a common connivance at each one to walk as he list; but this is not order but disorder by consent. Besides, a church may, for the most part, walk in order, when there are breaches and divisions. Some do agree to walk according to the rule, when others will deviate from it. It is orderly

to endeavour to reduce those that walk not orderly; though such just undertakings seem sometimes grounds of disturbance, and causes of convulsion in the whole body, threatening even its breaking in pieces; but yet this must be done to preserve the whole.

The word translated 'order,' Colos. ii. 5. τᾶξις, is a military word; it is the order of soldiers in a band, keeping rank and file, where every one keeps his place, follows his leader, observes the word of command, and his right-hand man. Hence the apostle joys to see their close order and steadfastness in the faith, their firmness, valour, and resolution in fighting the good fight of faith, and the order in so doing; not only in watching as single professors, but in marching orderly together, as an army with banners. There is nothing more comely than a church walking in order, when every one keeps his place, knows and practiseth his duty according to the rule, each submitting to the other in the performance of duty; when the elders know their places, and the people theirs. Christ hath been more faithful than Moses, and therefore hath not left his churches without sufficient rules to walk by.

That order may be in a church of Christ, the rules of the gospel must be known, and that by officers and people. They that are altogether ignorant of the rule, or negligent in attending it, or doubtful, and therefore always contending about it, will never walk according to it. Hence it is the great duty of ministers to study order well, and acquaint the people with it. It is greatly to be bewailed, that so few divines bend their studies that way. They content themselves only with studying and preaching the truths that concern faith in the Lord Jesus, and the mere moral part of holiness; but as to gospel churches, or instituted worship, they generally in their doctrine and practice let it alone, and administer sacraments as indefinitely as they preach; care not to stand related to one people more

than another, any farther than maintained by them. Likewise many good people are as great strangers to gospel churches and order, and (as their ministers) have a great averseness to both, and look upon it as schism and faction; and this is the great reason of the readiness of both to comply with rules of men for making churches (canons established by human laws), being carried away (if they would speak the truth) by corrupt Erastian principles, that Christ hath left the church to be altogether guided and governed by laws of magistratic sanction. Reformation from the gross idolatrous part of antichristianism was engaged in with some heroic courage and resolution; but the coldness and indifference of Protestants to any farther progress, almost ever since, is not a little to be lamented. Many think it enough that the foundation of the house is laid in purity of doctrine (and it is well if that were not rather written in the books than preached in pulpits at this day); but how little do they care to set their hands to building the house. Sure a great matter is from that spiritual slothfulness that many are fallen under, as likewise being ready to sink under the great discouragements laid before them by the adversaries of Judah, when they find the children of the spiritual captivity are about to build a gospel church unto the Lord. And how long hath this great work ceased? And will the Lord's ministers and people yet say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built? Is it time to build our own houses, and not the house of the Lord? Surely it is time to build, for we understand by books the number of years whereof the word of the Lord came to Daniel the prophet, and to John the beloved disciple and New Testament prophet, that he would accomplish twelve hundred and sixty years in the desolation of our Jerusalem, and the court which is without the temple, viz. The generality of visible professors, and

the external part of worship, which hath been so long trod down by Gentilism. Wherefore consider your ways, 'Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, build the house, saith the Lord, and I will take pleasure in it,' (Hag. i. 8.) 'and I will be glorified.' Men, it may be, have thought they have got, or at least, saved by not troubling themselves with the care, charge, and trouble of gathering churches, and walking in gospel-order; but God saith, 'Ye looked for much and lo it came to little, and when ye brought it home I did blow upon it. Why, saith the Lord, because of my house that is waste, and ye run every man to his own house.' I doubt not but the time is nigh at hand that the gospel temple must be built with greater splendour and glory than ever Solomon's or Zerubbabel's was; and though it seems to be a great mountain of difficulties, yet it shall become a plain before him that is exalted far above all principalities and powers; and as he hath laid the foundation thereof in the oppressed state of his people, so his hands shall finish it, and bring forth the head-stone thereof with shouting in the New Jerusalem-state, crying, now 'Grace, grace,' but then 'Glory, glory to it.'

This hastening glory we should endeavour to meet, and fetch in by earnest prayers and faithful endeavours, to promote the great work of our day. The pattern is of late years given forth with much clearness by models, such as God hath set up in this latter age in the wilderness, and sheltered by cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all its glory hath been a defence, yea, and it hath been a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge and covert from the storm and from the rain. Neither have we been left to act by the examples or traditions of men; we have had a full manifestation of the revealed mind and will of Christ, with the greatest evidence and con-

viction, God having in these latter times raised up many most eminent instruments for direction and encouragement unto his people, which he furnished accordingly with great qualifications to this end and purpose, that the true original, nature, institution, and order of evangelical churches might be known, distinguished, prized, and adhered to, by all that know the name of Christ, and would be followers of him as his disciples, in obedience to all his revealed mind and will. Amongst which faithful and renowned servants of Christ, the late author of this most useful and practical treatise hath approved himself to be one of the chief. I need say nothing of his steadfast piety, universal learning, indefatigable labours in incessant vindication of the doctrines of the gospel (of greatest weight), against all oppositions made thereto by men of corrupt minds. His surviving works will always be bespeaking his honourable remembrance amongst all impartial lovers of the truth. They that were acquainted with him, knew how much the state and standing of the churches of Christ, under the late sufferings and strugglings for reformation, were laid to heart by him; and therefore how he put forth his utmost strength to assist, aid, comfort, and support the sinking spirits of the poor saints and people of God, even wearied out with long and repeated persecutions. It is to be observed, that this ensuing treatise was occasioned by one of the last and most vigorous assaults made upon separate and congregational churches, by a pen dipped in the gall of that persecuting spirit, under which God's people groaned throughout this land. He then wrote an elaborate account of evangelical churches, their original, institution, &c. with a vindication of them from the charges laid in against them, by the author of The Unreasonableness of Separation. This he lived to print, and promised to handle the subject more particularly, which is here

performed. He lived to finish it under his great bodily infirmities, whereby he saw himself hastening to the end of his race; yet so great was his love to Christ, that whilst he had life and breath he drew not back his hand from his service. This work he finished, with others, through the gracious support and assistance of divine power, and corrected the copy before his departure. So that, reader, thou mayest be assured, that what thou hast here, was his (errata of the press only excepted), and likewise, that it ought to be esteemed as his legacy to the church of Christ, being a great part of his dying labours; and therefore it is most uncharitable to suppose, that the things here wrote were penned with any other design than to advance the glory and interest of Christ in the world, and that they were not matters of great weight on his own spirit. And upon the perusal that I have had of these papers, I cannot but recommend them to all diligent inquirers after the true nature, way, order, and practice of evangelical churches, as a true and faithful account, according to what understanding the professors thereof, for the most part, have had and practised. Whoever is otherwise minded, he hath the liberty of his own light and conscience. Lastly, whereas many serious professors of the faith of the Lord Jesus (it may be), well grounded in the main saving truths of the gospel, are yet much to seek of these necessary truths, for want of good information therein, and therefore walk not up to all the revealed mind of Christ, as they sincerely desire: let such, with unprejudiced minds, read and consider what is here offered to them, and receive nothing upon human authority; follow no man in judgment or practice any farther than he is a follower of Christ. And this is all the request of him that is a lover of all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ.

J. C.

THE

TRUE NATURE

OF

A GOSPEL CHURCH

AND ITS GOVERNMENT.

CHAP. I.

The subject matter of the church.

THE church may be considered either as unto its essence, constitution, and being; or as unto its power and order, when it is organized. As unto its essence and being, its constituent parts are its matter and form. These we must inquire into.

By the matter of the church, we understand the persons whereof the church doth consist, with their qualifications: and by its form, the reason, cause, and way of that kind of relation among them, which gives them the being of a church, and therewithal an interest in all that belongs unto a church, either privilege or power, as such.

Our first inquiry being concerning what sort of persons our Lord Jesus Christ requireth and admitteth to be the visible subjects of his kingdom, we are to be regulated in our determination by respect unto his honour, glory, and the holiness of his rule. To reckon such persons to be subjects of Christ, members of his body, such as he requires and owns, (for others are not so) who would not be tolerated, at least not approved, in a well-governed kingdom or commonwealth of the world, is highly dishonourable unto him.[a] But it is so come to pass, that let men be never so notoriously and flagitiously wicked, until they become pests of the earth, yet are they esteemed to belong to the church of Christ. And not only so, but it is thought little less than schism to forbid

[a] Psal. xv. 1—5. Psal. xxiv. 3, 4. Psal. xciii. 5. 2 Cor. viii. 23. Ephes. v. 27.

them the communion of the church in all its sacred privileges. Howbeit, the Scripture doth in general represent the kingdom or church of Christ, to consist of persons called saints, separated from the world, with many other things of an alike nature, as we shall see immediately. And if the honour of Christ were of such weight with us as it ought to be; if we understood aright the nature and ends of his kingdom, and that the peculiar glory of it, above all the kingdoms in the world, consists in the holiness of its subjects, such a holiness as the world in its wisdom knoweth not, we would duly consider whom we avow to belong thereunto. Those who know aught of these things, will not profess that persons openly profane, vicious, sensual, wicked, and ignorant, are approved and owned of Christ as the subjects of his kingdom,[b] or that it is his will that we should receive them into the communion of the church. But an old opinion of the unlawfulness of separation from a church, on the account of the mixture of wicked men in it, is made a scare-crow to frighten men from attempting the reformation of the greatest evils, and a covert for the composing churches of such members only.

Some things therefore are to be premised unto what shall be offered unto the right stating of this inquiry: as,

1. That if there be no more required of any as unto personal qualifications, in a visible uncontrollable profession, to constitute them subjects of Christ's kingdom, and members of his church,[c] but what is required by the most righteous and severe laws of men to constitute a good subject or citizen, the distinction between his visible kingdom and the kingdoms of the world, as unto the principal causes of it, is utterly lost. Now all negative qualifications, as that men are not oppressors, drunkards, revilers, swearers, adulterers, &c. are required hereunto; but yet it is so fallen out, that generally more is required to constitute such a citizen as shall represent the righteous laws he liveth under than to constitute a member of the church of Christ.

2. That whereas regeneration is expressly required in the gospel,[d] to give a right and privilege unto an entrance into the church or kingdom of Christ, whereby that kingdom of his is distinguished from all other kingdoms in and of the

[b] 2 Tim. iii. 1—5. [c] Ezek. xxii. 26. [d] John iii. 3. Tit. iii. 3—5.

world, unto an interest wherein never any such thing was required; it must of necessity be something better, more excellent and sublime, than any thing the laws and polities of men pretend unto or prescribe. Wherefore it cannot consist in any outward rites, easy to be observed by the worst and vilest of men; besides the Scripture gives us a description of it, in opposition unto its consisting in any such rite; 1 Pet. iii. 21. And many things required unto good citizens, are far better than the mere observation of such a rite.

Of this regeneration baptism is the symbol, the sign, expression, and representation.[e] Wherefore unto those who are in a due manner partakers of it, it giveth all the external rights and privileges which belong unto them that are regenerate, until they come unto such seasons, wherein the personal performance of those duties whereon the continuation of the estate of visible regeneration doth depend, is required of them. Herein if they fail, they lose all privilege and benefit by their baptism.

So speaks the apostle in the case of circumcision under the law; Rom. ii. 25. 'For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.' It is so in the case of baptism. Verily it profiteth, if a man stand unto the terms of the covenant which is tendered therein between God and his soul; for it will give him right unto all the outward privileges of a regenerate state; but if he do not, as in the sight of God, his baptism is no baptism, as unto the real communication of grace and acceptance with him;[f] so in the sight of the church, it is no baptism, as unto a participation of the external rights and privileges of a regenerate state.

4. God alone is judge concerning this regeneration, as unto its internal real principle and state in the souls of men,[g] whereon the participation of all the spiritual advantages of the covenant of grace doth depend: the church is judge of its evidences and fruits in their external demonstration, as unto a participation of the outward privileges of a regenerate state,[h] and no farther. And we shall hereon briefly declare what belongs unto the forming of a right judgment

[e] John iii. 5. Acts ii. 38. 1 Pet. iii. 21.
[f] Phil. iii. 18, 19. Tit. i. 15, 16.
[g] Acts xv. 8. Rev. ii. 23.
[h] Acts viii. 13.

herein, and who are to be esteemed fit members of any gospel church-state, or have a right so to be.

1. Such as from whom we are obliged to withdraw or withhold communion, can be no part of the matter constituent of a church, or are not meet members for the first constitution of it.[i] But such are all habitual sinners; those who having prevalent habits and inclinations unto sins of any kind unmortified, do walk according unto them. Such are profane swearers, drunkards, fornicators, covetous, oppressors, and the like, 'who shall not inherit the kingdom of God;' 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. Phil. iii. 18, 19. 2 Thess. iii. 6. 2 Tim. iii. 5. as a man living and dying in any known sin, that is habitually, without repentance cannot be saved; so a man known to live in sin, cannot regularly be received into any church. To compose churches of habitual sinners, and that either as unto sins of commission, or sins of omission, is not to erect temples to Christ, but chapels unto the devil.

2. Such as being in the fellowship of the church, are to be admonished of any scandalous sin, which if they repent not of, they are to be cast out of the church, are not meet members for the original constitution of a church.[k] This is the state of them who abide obstinate in any known sin, whereby they have given offence unto others, without a professed repentance thereof, although they have not lived in it habitually.

3. They are to be such as visibly answer the description given of gospel churches in the Scripture, so as the titles assigned therein unto the members of such churches, may on good grounds be appropriated unto them. To compose churches of such persons as do not visibly answer the character given of what they were of old, and what they were always to be by virtue of the law of Christ or gospel-constitution, is not church edification but destruction. And those who look on the things spoken of all church members of old, as that they were saints by calling, lively stones in the house of God, justified and sanctified, separate from the world, &c. as those which were in them, and did indeed belong unto them, but even deride the necessity of the same things in

[i] 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. Phil. iii. 18, 19. 2 Thess. iii. 6. 2 Tim. iii. 5. Rom. ix. 6, 7. Tit. i. 16. [k] Matt. xviii. 16—18. 1 Cor. v. 11.

present church members, or the application of them unto those who are so, are themselves no small part of that woful degeneracy which Christian religion is fallen under. Let it then be considered what is spoken of the church of the Jews in their dedication unto God, as unto their typical holiness, with the application of it unto Christian churches in real holiness, 1 Pet. ii. 5. 9. with the description given of them constantly in the Scripture, as faithful, holy, believing, as the house of God, as his temple wherein he dwells by his Spirit, as the body of Christ united and compacted by the communication of the Spirit unto them; as also what is said concerning their ways, walkings, and duties; and it will be uncontrollably evident of what sort our church members ought to be; nor are those of any other sort able to discharge the duties which are incumbent on all church members, nor to use the privileges they are intrusted withal. Wherefore, I say, to suppose churches regularly to consist of such persons, for the greater part of them, as no way answer the description given of church members in their original institution, nor capable to discharge the duties prescribed unto them, but giving evidence of habits and actions inconsistent therewithal, is not only to disturb all church order, but utterly to overthrow the ends and being of churches. Nor is there any thing more scandalous unto Christian religion, than what Bellarmine affirms to be the judgment of the papists in opposition unto all others; namely, that 'no internal virtue or grace is required unto the constitution of a church in its members.' Lib. 3. de Eccles. cap. 2.

4. They must be such as do make an open profession of the subjection of their souls and consciences unto the authority of Christ in the gospel, and their readiness to yield obedience unto all his commands.[1] This I suppose will not be denied; for not only doth the Scripture make this profession necessary unto the participation of any benefit or privilege of the gospel; but the nature of the things themselves requires indispensably that so it should be. For nothing can be more unreasonable than that men should be taken into the privileges attending obedience unto the laws and commands of Christ, without avowing or professing that

[1] Rom. x. 10. 2 Cor. viii. 5. ix. 13. Matt. x. 32, 33. Luke ix. 16. 2 Tim. ii. 12. Rom. xv. 9. John xii. 42. 1 John iv. 2, 3. 15.

obedience. Wherefore, our inquiry is only what is required unto such a profession, as may render men meet to be members of a church, and give them a right thereunto. For to suppose such a confession of Christian religion to be compliant with the gospel, which is made by many who openly 'live in sin, being disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate,' is to renounce the gospel itself. Christ is not the high-priest of such a profession. I shall therefore declare briefly what is necessary unto this profession, that all may know what it is which is required unto the entrance of any into our churches, wherein our practice hath been sufficiently traduced.

1. There is required unto it a competent knowledge of the doctrines and mystery of the gospel, especially concerning the person and offices of Christ. The confession hereof was the ground whereon he granted the keys of the kingdom of heaven, or all church-power unto believers; Matt. xvi. 17—19. The first instruction which he gave unto his apostles was, that they should teach men, by the preaching of the gospel, in the knowledge of the truth revealed by him. The knowledge required in the members of the Judaical church, that they might be translated into the Christian, was principally, if not solely, that of his person, and the acknowledgment of him to be the true Messiah, the son of God. For as on their unbelief thereof their eternal ruin did depend, as he told them, 'if you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins;' so the confession of him was sufficient on their part unto their admission into the gospel church-state. And the reasons of it are apparent. With others, an instruction in all the mysteries of religion, especially in those that are fundamental, is necessary unto the profession we inquire after. So Justin Martyr tells us what pains they took in those primitive times, to instruct those in the mysteries of religion, who, upon a general conviction of its truth, were willing to adhere unto the profession of it. And what was their judgment herein, is sufficiently known, from the keeping a multitude in the state of catechumens, before they would admit them into the fellowship of the church. They are not therefore to be blamed, they do but discharge their duty, who refuse to receive into church communion such as are ignorant of the fundamental doctrines and mysteries of

the gospel; or if they have learned any thing of them from a form of words, yet really understand nothing of them. The promiscuous driving of all sorts of persons who have been baptized in their infancy unto a participation of all church privileges, is a profanation of the holy institutions of Christ. This knowledge therefore belonging unto profession is itself to be professed.

2. There is required unto it a professed subjection of soul and conscience unto the authority of Christ in the church.[m] This in general is performed by all that are baptized when they are adult, as being by their own actual consent baptized in the name of Christ. And it is required of all them who are baptized in their infancy, when they are able with faith and understanding to profess their consent unto, and abiding in that covenant whereinto they were initiated.

3. An instruction in, and consent unto, the doctrine of self-denial and bearing of the cross, in a particular manner: for this is made indispensably necessary by our Saviour himself, unto all that will be his disciples.[n] And it hath been a great disadvantage unto the glory of Christian religion, that men have not been more and better instructed therein. It is commonly thought, that whoever will, may be a Christian at an easy rate, it will cost him nothing. But the gospel gives us another account of these things. For it not only warns us, that reproaches, hatred, sufferings of all sorts, oft-times to death itself, are the common lot of all its professors, who will live godly in Christ Jesus; but also requires, that at our initiation into the profession of it, we consider aright the dread of them all, and engage cheerfully to undergo them. Hence, in the primitive times, whilst all sorts of miseries were continually presented unto them who embraced the Christian religion, their willing engagement to undergo them, who were converted, was a firm evidence of the sincerity of their faith, as it ought to be unto us also in times of difficulty and persecution. Some may suppose that the faith and confession of this doctrine of self-denial and readiness for the cross, is of use only in time of persecution, and so doth not belong unto them who have continually the countenance and favour of public authority. I say, it is, at

[m] Matt. xxviii. 18—20. 2 Cor. viii. 5.

[n] Matt. x. 37—39. Mark viii. 34. 38. Luke ix. 23. Phil. iii. 18. Acts iv. 10, 11. 20. xxiv. 14.

least as they judge, well for them; with others it is not so, whose outward state makes the public avowing of this duty indispensably necessary unto them: and I may add it as my own thoughts (though they are not my own alone), that notwithstanding all the countenance that is given unto any church by the public magistracy, yet whilst we are in this world, those who will faithfully discharge their duty, as ministers of the gospel especially, shall have need to be prepared for sufferings. To escape sufferings, and enjoy worldly advantages by sinful compliances, or bearing with men in their sins, is no gospel direction.

4. Conviction and confession of sin, with the way of deliverance by Jesus Christ, is that answer of a good conscience, that is required in the baptism of them that are adult. 1 Pet. iii.

5. Unto this profession is required the constant performance of all known duties of religion, both of piety in the public and private worship of God, as also of charity with respect unto others.[o] 'Shew me thy faith by thy works.'

6. A careful abstinence from all known sins, giving scandal or offence, either unto the world, or unto the church of God.[p] And the gospel requires, that this confession be made ('with the mouth confession is made unto salvation') against, (1.) Fear, (2.) Shame, (3.) The course of the world, (4.) The opposition of all enemies whatever.

Hence it appears, that there are none excluded from an entrance into the church-state, but such as are either, (1.) Grossly ignorant, or, (2.) Persecutors, or reproachers of those that are good, or of the ways of God wherein they walk; or, (3.) Idolaters; or, (4.) Men scandalous in their lives in the commission of sins, or omission of duties, through vicious habits or inclinations; or, (5.) Such as would partake of gospel privileges and ordinances, yet openly avow that they will not submit unto the law and commands of Christ in the gospel; concerning whom, and the like, the Scripture rule is peremptory; 'From such turn away.'

And herein we are remote from exceeding the example and care of the primitive churches. Yea, there are but few, if any, that arrive unto it. Their endeavour was to preach unto all they could, and rejoiced in the multitudes that came to hear the word. But if any did essay to join them-

[o] Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. [p] 1 Cor. x. 32. Phil. i. 10.

selves unto the church, their diligence in their examination and instruction, their severe inquiries into their conversation, their disposing of them for a long time into a state of expectation, for their trial, before their admittance, were remarkable. And some of the ancients complain, that their promiscuous admittance of all sorts of persons that would profess the Christian religion, into church membership, which took place afterward, ruined all the beauty, order, and discipline of the church.

The things ascribed unto those who are to be esteemed the proper subject matter of a visible church, are such as in the judgment of charity entitle them unto all the appellations of saints; called, sanctified, that is visibly and by profession, which are given unto the members of all the churches in the New Testament, and which must be answered in those who are admitted into that privilege, if we do not wholly neglect our only patterns. By these things, although they should any of them not be real living members of the mystical body of Christ, unto whom he is a head of spiritual and vital influence; yet are they meet members of that body of Christ unto which he is a head of rule and government; as also meet to be esteemed subjects of his kingdom. And none are excluded but such, as concerning whom rules are given, either to withdraw from them, or to cast them out of church society, or are expressly excluded by God himself from any share in the privileges of his covenant; Psal. l. 16, 17.

Divines of all sorts do dispute from the Scripture and the testimonies of the ancients, that hypocrites and persons unregenerate may be true members of visible churches. And it is a matter very easy to be proved; nor do I know any by whom it is denied. But the only question is, that whereas, undoubtedly, profession is necessary unto all church communion; whether, if men do profess themselves hypocrites in state, and unregenerate in mind, that profession do sufficiently qualify them for church communion. And whereas there is a double profession, one by words, the other by works, as the apostle declares, Tit. i. 16. whether the latter be not as interpretative of the mind and state of men as the former; other contest we have with none in this matter.

Bellarmine de Eccles. lib. iii. cap. 2. gives an account out of Augustine, and that truly, from Brevec. Collat. Col. 3. of

the state of the church. 'It doth,' saith he, 'consist of a soul and body. The soul is the internal graces of the Spirit; the body is the profession of them, with the sacraments. All true believers making profession, belong to the soul and body of the church. Some (as believing catechumens) belong to the soul, but not to the body: others are of the body, but not of the soul; namely, such as have no internal grace or true faith; and they are like the hair or the nails, or evil humours in the body.' And thereunto adds, that his definition of the church compriseth this last sort only; which is all one, as if we should define a man to be a thing constituted and made up of hair, nails, and ill humours; and let others take heed that they have no such churches.

There is nothing more certain in matter of fact, than that evangelical churches, at their first constitution, were made up and did consist of such members as we have described, and no other. Nor is there one word in the whole Scripture intimating any concession or permission of Christ, to receive into his church those who are not so qualified. Others have nothing to plead for themselves but possession; which being 'malæ fidei,' ill obtained, and ill continued, will afford them no real advantage when the time of trial shall come. Wherefore, it is certain that such they ought to be. No man, as I suppose, is come unto that profligate sense of spiritual things, as to deny that the members of the church ought to be visibly holy. For if so, they may affirm, that all the promises and privileges made and granted to the church, do belong unto them who visibly live and die in their sins; which is to overthrow the gospel. And if they ought so to be, and were so at first, when they are not so openly and visibly, there is a declension from the original constitution of churches, and a sinful deviation in them from the rule of Christ.

This original constitution of churches, with respect unto their members, was for the substance of it, as we observed, preferred in the primitive times, whilst persecution from without was continued, and discipline preserved within. I have in part declared before, what great care and circumspection the church then used in the admission of any into their fellowship and order, and what trial they were to undergo before they were received; and it is known also, with

what severe discipline they watched over the faith, walking, conversation, and manners of all their members. Indeed, such was their care and diligence herein, that there is scarce left in some churches, at present, the least resemblance or appearance of what was their state and manner of rule. Wherefore, some think it meet to ascend no higher in the imitation of the primitive churches than the times of the Christian emperors, when all things began to rush into the fatal apostacy, which I shall here speak a little farther unto. For,

Upon the Roman emperors embracing Christian religion, whereby not only outward peace and tranquillity was secured unto the church, but the profession of Christian religion was countenanced, encouraged, honoured, and rewarded; the rule, care, and diligence of the churches about the admission of members were in a great measure relinquished and forsaken. The rulers of the church began to think, that the glory of it consisted in its numbers; finding both their own power, veneration, and revenue increased thereby. In a short time, the inhabitants of those cities and provinces, upon a bare outward profession, were admitted into churches. And then began the outward court, that is, all that which belongs unto the outward worship and order of the church, to be trampled on by the Gentiles, not kept any more to the measure of Scripture rule, which thenceforth was applied only to the temple of God and them that worshipped therein: for this corruption of the church, as to the matter of it, was the occasion and means of introducing all that corruption in doctrine, worship, order, and rule which ensued, and ended in the great apostacy. For whatever belonged unto any of these things, especially these that consist in practice, were accommodated unto the state of the members of the churches: and such they were as stood in need of superstitious rites to be mixed with their worship, as not understanding the power and glory of that which is spiritual; such as no interest in church order could be committed unto, seeing they were not qualified to bear any share in it; such as stood in need of a rule over them, with grandeur and power, like unto that among the Gentiles. Wherefore, the accommodation of all church concerns, unto the state and condition of such corrupt members as churches were filled with, and at length

made up of, proved the ruin of the church in all its order and beauty.

But so it fell out, that in the Protestant reformation of the church, very little regard was had thereunto. Those great and worthy persons who were called unto that work, did set themselves principally, yea, solely for the most part, against the false doctrine and idolatrous worship of the church of Rome; as judging, that if they were removed and taken away, the people by the efficacy of truth and order of worship, would be retrieved from the evil of their ways, and primitive holiness be again reduced among them. For they thought it was the doctrine and worship of that church, which had filled the people with darkness and corrupted their conversations. Nor did they absolutely judge amiss therein: for although they were themselves at first introduced in compliance with the ignorance and wickedness of the people, yet they were suited to promote them, as well as to countenance them; which they did effectually. Hence it came to pass, that the reformation of the church as unto the matter of it, or the purity and holiness of its members, was not in the least attempted, until Calvin set up his discipline at Geneva, which hath filled the world with clamours against him from that day to this. In most other places, churches, in the matter of them, continued the same as they were in the papacy, and in many places as bad in their lives as when they were Papists.

But this method was designed in the holy, wise providence of God, for the good and advantage of the church, in a progressive reformation, as it had made a gradual progress into its decay. For had the reformers, in the first place, set themselves to remove out of the church such as were unmeet for its communion, or to have gathered out of them such as were meet members of the church according to its original institution, it would, through the paucity of the number of those who could have complied with the design, have greatly obstructed, if not utterly defeated, their endeavour for the reformation of doctrine and worship. This was that in the preaching of the gospel and the profession of it, which God hath since made effectual, in these nations especially, and in other places, to turn multitudes from 'darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto himself, translating them into

the kingdom of his dear Son.' Hereby way is made for a necessary addition unto the work of reformation, if not to the closing of it, which could not at first be attained unto, nor well attempted; namely, the reduction of churches, as unto their matter, or the members of them, unto the primitive institution.

The sum of what is designed in this discourse, is this only. We desire no more to constitute church members, and we can desire no less, than what in judgment of charity may comply with the union that is between Christ the head and the church; 1 Cor. xii. 27. Eph. ii. 22. 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. 2 Cor. xi. 1. 18. 1 Thess. i. 1, 2, &c. that may in the same judgment answer the way of the beginning and increase of the church according unto the will of God, who adds unto the church such as shall be saved; Acts ii. 47. the rule of our receiving of them, being because he hath received them; Rom. xiv. 1, 2. that may answer that profession of faith which was the foundation of the church, which was not what flesh and blood, but what God himself revealed; Matt. xvi. 16. and not such as have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof; 2 Tim. iii. 5. We acknowledge that many church members are not what they ought to be, but that many hypocrites may be among them; that the judgment which is passed on the confession and profession of them that are to be admitted into churches, is charitative, proceeding on evidence of moral probability, not determining the reality of the things themselves; that there are sundry measures of light, knowledge, experience, and abilities and readiness of mind in those that are to be admitted, all whose circumstances are duly to be considered, with indulgence unto their weakness: and if the Scripture will allow us any farther latitude, we are ready to embrace it.

Our present inquiry yet remaining on these considerations, is, What is our duty in point of communion with such churches as are made up or composed of members visibly unholy; or such as comply not with the qualifications that are by the rules of the gospel indispensably required, to give unto any a regular entrance into the church, with a participation of its privileges. For it is in vain to expect, that such churches will reform themselves by any act, duty, or power of their own; seeing the generality of them are justly

supposed averse from, and enemies unto any such work. I answer therefore,

1. It must be remembered, that communion with particular churches is to be regulated absolutely by edification. No man is or can be obliged to abide in or confine himself unto the communion of any particular church any longer than it is for his edification. And this liberty is allowed unto all persons by the church of England. For, allow a man to be born in such a parish, to be baptized in it, and there educated; yet, if at any time he judge that the ministry of the parish is not useful unto his edification, he may withdraw from the communion in that parish, by the removal of his habitation, it may be to the next door. Wherefore,

2. If the corruption of a church, as to the matter of it, be such as that,

1. It is inconsistent with, and overthroweth all that communion that ought to be among the members of the same church, in love without dissimulation, whereof we shall treat afterward.

2. If the scandals and offences which must of necessity abound in such churches, be really obstructive of edification.

3. If the ways and walking of the generality of their members be dishonourable unto the gospel and the profession of it, giving no representation of the holiness of Christ or his doctrine.

4. If such churches do not, can not, will not reform themselves: then,

It is the duty of every man who takes care of his own present edification, and the future salvation of his soul, peaceably to withdraw from the communion of such churches, and to join in such others, where all the ends of church societies may in some measure be obtained. Men may not only do so, because all obligation unto the use of means for the attaining of such an end doth cease, when the means are not suited thereunto, but obstructive of its attainment; but also the giving of a testimony hereby against the declension from the rule of Christ in the institution of churches, and the dishonour that by this means is reflected on the gospel, is necessary unto all that desire to acquit themselves as loyal subjects unto their lord and king. And it cannot be ques-

tioned by any, who understand the nature, use, and end of evangelical churches, but that a relinquishment of the rule of the gospel in any of them, as unto the practice of holiness, is as just a cause of withdrawing communion from them, as their forsaking the same rule in doctrine and worship.

It may be some will judge that sundry inconveniences will ensue on this assertion, when any have a mind to practise according unto it. But when the matter of fact supposed, is such as is capable of an uncontrollable evidence, no inconvenience can ensue on the practice directed unto, any way to be compared unto the mischief of obliging believers to abide always in such societies, to the ruin of their souls.

Two things may be yet inquired into, that relate unto this part of the state of evangelical churches: As,

1. Whether a church may not, ought not, to take under its conduct, inspection, and rule, such as are not yet meet to be received into full communion; such as are the children and servants of those who are complete members of the church. *Ans.* No doubt the church, in its officers, may and ought so to do; and it is a great evil when it is neglected. For, (1.) They are to take care of parents and masters as such, and as unto the discharge of their duty in their families; which, without an inspection into the condition of their children and servants, they cannot do. (2.) Households were constantly reckoned unto the church, when the heads of the families were entered into covenant; Luke xix. 9. Acts xvi. 15. Rom. xvi. 10, 11. 1 Cor. i. 16. 2 Tim. iv. 19. (3.) Children do belong unto, and have an interest in, the parents' covenant; not only in the promise of it, which gives them right unto baptism; but in the profession of it in the church covenant, which gives them a right unto all the privileges of the church whereof they are capable, until they voluntarily relinquish their claim unto them. (4.) Baptizing the children of church members, giving them thereby an admission into the visible catholic church puts an obligation on the officers of the church, to take care, what in them lieth, that they may be kept and preserved meet members of it, by a due watch over them, and instruction of them. (5.) Though neither the church nor its privileges be continued and preserved, as of old, by carnal generation; yet because

of the nature of the dispensation of God's covenant, wherein he hath promised to be a God unto believers and their seed, the advantage of the means of a gracious education in such families, and of conversion and edification in the ministry of the church, ordinarily the continuation of the church, is to depend on the addition of members out of the families already incorporated in it. The church is not to be like the kingdom of the Mamalukes, wherein there was no regard unto natural successors; but it was continually made up of strangers and foreigners incorporated into it: nor like the beginning of the Roman commonweal, which consisting of men only, was like to have been the matter of one age alone.

The duty of the church towards this sort of persons consists, (1.) In prayer for them; (2.) Catechetical instruction of them, according unto their capacities; (3.) Advice to their parents concerning them; (4.) Visiting of them in the families whereunto they do belong; (5.) Encouragement of them, or admonition, according as there is occasion; (6.) Direction for a due preparation unto the joining themselves unto the church, in full communion; (7.) Exclusion of them from a claim unto the participation of the especial privileges of the church, where they render themselves visibly unmeet for them, and unworthy of them.

The neglect of this duty brings unconceivable prejudice unto churches, and if continued in, will prove their ruin. For they are not to be preserved, propagated, and continued, at the easy rate of a constant supply by the carnal baptized posterity of those who do at any time justly or unjustly belong unto them; but they are to prepare a meet supply of members, by all the spiritual means whose administration they are intrusted withal. And besides, one end of churches is to preserve the covenant of God in the families once graciously taken thereinto. The neglect therefore herein, is carefully to be watched against. And it doth arise, (1.) From an ignorance of the duty, in most that are concerned in it. (2.) From the paucity of officers in most churches, both teaching and ruling, who are to attend unto it. (3.) The want of a teacher or catechist in every church, who should attend only unto the instruction of this sort of persons. (4.) Want of a sense of their duty in parents and masters.

[1.] In not valuing aright the great privilege of having their children and servants under the inspection, care, and blessing of the church. [2.] In not instilling into them a sense of it, with the duties that are expected from them, on the account of their relation unto the church. [3.] In not bringing them duly unto the church assemblies. [4.] In not preparing and disposing them unto an actual entrance into full communion with the church. [5.] In not advising with the elders of the church about them. And, [6.] Especially by an indulgence unto that loose and careless kind of education in conformity unto the world, which generally prevails. Hence it is, that most of them on various accounts and occasions, drop off here and there from the communion of the church, and all relation thereunto, without the least respect unto them, or inquiry after them; churches being supplied by such as are occasionally converted in them.

Where churches are complete in the kind and number of their officers, sufficient to attend unto all the duties and occasions of them; where whole families, in the conjunction of the heads of them unto the church, are dedicated unto God, according unto the several capacities of those whereof they do consist; where the design of the church is to provide for its own successive continuation in the preservation of the interest of God's covenant in the families taken thereinto; where parents esteem themselves accountable unto God and the church, as unto the relation of their children thereunto, there is provision for church-order, usefulness, and beauty, beyond what is usually to be observed.

2. The especial duty of the church in admission of members in the time of great persecution, may be a little inquired into. And, (1.) It is evident, that in the apostolical and primitive times, the churches were exceeding careful not to admit into their society, such as by whom they might be betrayed unto the rage of their persecuting adversaries. Yet, notwithstanding all their care, they could seldom avoid it; but that when persecution grew severe, some or other would fall from them, either out of fear, with the power of temptation, or by a discovery of their latent hypocrisy and unbelief, unto their great trial and distress. However, they were not so scrupulous herein, with respect unto their own safety, as to exclude such as gave a tolerable account of their sin-

cerity; but in the discharge of their duty, committed themselves unto the care of Jesus Christ. And this is the rule whereby we ought to walk on such occasions. Wherefore, (2.) On supposition of the establishment of idolatry and persecution, there or in any place, as it was of old, under, first the pagan, and afterward the antichristian tyranny; the church is obliged to receive into its care and communion all such as, [1.] Flee from idols, and are ready to confirm their testimony against them with suffering. [2.] Make profession of the truth of the gospel of the doctrine of Christ, especially as unto his person and offices; are, [3.] Free from scandalous sins; and, [4.] Are willing to give up themselves unto the rule of Christ in the church, and a subjection unto all his ordinances and institutions therein. For in such a season, these things are so full an indication of sincerity, as that in the judgment of charity, they render men meet to be members of the visible church. And if any of this sort of persons, through the severity of the church in their non-admission of them, should be cast on a conjunction in superstitious and idolatrous worship, or be otherwise exposed unto temptations and discouragements prejudicial unto their souls, I know not how such a church can answer the refusal of them unto the great and universal pastor of the whole flock.

CHAP. II.

Of the formal cause of a particular church.

The way or means whereby such persons as are described in the foregoing chapter, may become a church, or enter into a church-state, is by mutual confederation, or solemn agreement for the performance of all the duties which the Lord Christ hath prescribed unto his disciples in such churches, and in order to the exercise of the power wherewith they are intrusted, according unto the rule of the word.

For the most part, the churches that are in the world at present, know not how they came so to be, continuing only in that state which they have received by tradition from their

fathers. Few there are, who think that any act or duty of their own is required to instate them in church-order and relation. And it is acknowledged, that there is a difference between the continuation of a church, and its first erection. Yet, that that continuation may be regular, it is required that its first congregating (for the church is a congregation) was so; as also, that the force and efficacy of it be still continued. Wherefore, the causes of that first gathering must be inquired into.

The churches mentioned in the New Testament, planted or gathered by the apostles, were particular churches, as hath been proved. These churches did consist each of them of many members, who were so members of one of them, as that they were not members of another. The saints of the church of Corinth, were not members of the church at Philippi. And the inquiry is, How those believers in one place and the other became to be a church, and that distinct from all others? The Scripture affirms in general, that they gave up themselves unto the Lord and unto the apostles, who guided them in these affairs by the will of God, 2 Cor. viii. 5. and that other believers were added unto the church; Acts ii.

That it is the will and command of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all his disciples should be joined in such societies, for the duties and ends of them prescribed and limited by himself, hath been proved sufficiently before. All that are discipled by the word, are to be 'taught to do and observe all his commands;' Matt. xxviii. 20.

This could originally be no otherwise done, but by their own actual, express, voluntary consent. There are sundry things which concur as remote causes, or pre-requisite con ditions, unto this conjunction of believers in a particular church, and without which it cannot be. Such are baptism, profession of the Christian faith, convenient cohabitation, resorting to the preaching of the word in the same place. But neither any of these distinctly or separately, nor all of them in conjunction, are or can be the constitutive form of a particular church. For it is evident that they may all be, and yet no such church-state ensue. They cannot altogether engage unto those duties, nor communicate those powers, which appertain unto this state.

Were there no other order in particular churches, no other discipline to be exercised in them, nor rule over them, no other duties, no other ends assigned unto them, but what are generally owned and practised in parochial assemblies, the preaching of the word within such a precinct of cohabitation, determined by civil authority, might constitute a church. But if a church be such a society as is intrusted in itself with sundry powers and privileges depending on sundry duties prescribed unto it, if it constitute new relations between persons, that neither naturally nor morally were before so related, as marriage doth between husband and wife; if it require new mutual duties, and give new mutual rights among themselves, not required of them either as unto their matter, or as unto their manner before; it is vain to imagine that this state can arise from, or have any other formal cause, but the joint consent and virtual confederation of those concerned, unto these ends: for there is none of them can have any other foundation; they are all of them resolved into the wills of men, bringing themselves under an obligation unto them by their voluntary consent. I say unto the wills of men, as their formal cause; the supreme efficient cause of them all being the will, law, and constitution of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus it is in all societies, in all relations that are not merely natural (such as between parents and children, wherein the necessity of powers and mutual duties is predetermined by a superior law, even that of nature), wherein powers, privileges, and mutual duties are established, as belonging unto that society. Nor, after its first institution, can any one be incorporated into it, but by his own consent, and engagement to observe the laws of it. Nor, if the nature and duties of churches were acknowledged, could there be any contest in this matter; for the things ensuing are clear and evident.

1. The Lord Christ, by his authority, hath appointed and instituted this church-state, as that there should be such churches, as we have proved before.

2. That by his word or law he hath granted powers and privileges unto this church, and prescribed duties unto all belonging unto it, wherein they can have no concernment who are not incorporated into such a church.

3. That therefore he doth require and command all his disciples to join themselves in such church relations as we have proved; warranting them so to do by his word and command: wherefore,

4. This joining of themselves, whereon depends all their interest in church powers and privileges, all their obligation unto church duties, is a voluntary act of the obedience of faith unto the authority of Christ, nor can it be any thing else.

5. Herein do they give themselves unto the Lord, and to one another, by their officers, in a peculiar manner, according to the will of God; 2 Cor. viii. 5.

6. To give ourselves unto the Lord, that is, unto the Lord Jesus Christ, is expressly to engage to do and observe all that he hath appointed and commanded in the church; as that phrase every where signifieth in the Scripture, as also joining ourselves unto God, which is the same.

7. This resignation of ourselves unto the will, power, and authority of Christ, with an express engagement made unto him of doing and observing all his commands, hath the nature of a covenant on our part; and it hath so on his, by virtue of the promise of his especial presence annexed unto this engagement on our part; Matt. xxviii. 18—20.

8. For whereas there are three things required unto a covenant between God and man. (1.) That it be of God's appointment and institution. (2.) That upon a prescription of duties there be a solemn engagement unto their performance on the part of men. (3.) That there be especial promises of God annexed thereunto, in which consists the matter of confederation, whereof mutual express restipulation is the form; they all concur herein.

9. This covenant which we intend, is not the covenant of grace absolutely considered; nor are all the duties belonging unto that covenant prescribed in it; but the principal of them, as faith, repentance, and the like, are presupposed unto it; nor hath annexed unto it all the promises and privileges of the new covenant absolutely considered; but it is that which is prescribed as a gospel duty in the covenant of grace, whereunto do belong all the duties of evangelical worship, all the powers and privileges of the

church, by virtue of the especial promise of the peculiar presence of Christ in such a church.

10. Whereas therefore in the constitution of a church, believers do give up themselves unto the Lord, and are bound solemnly to engage themselves to do and observe all the things which Christ hath commanded to be done and observed in that state, whereon he hath promised to be present with them and among them in an especial manner; which presence of his doth interest them in all the rights, powers, and privileges of the church; their so doing, hath the nature of a divine covenant included in it, which is the formal cause of their church-state and being.

11. Besides, as we have proved before, there are many mutual duties required of all which join in church societies, and powers to be exercised and submitted unto, whereunto none can be obliged without their own consent. They must give up themselves unto one another by the will of God: that is, they must agree, consent, and engage among themselves to observe all those mutual duties, to use all those privileges, and to exercise all those powers, which the Lord Christ hath prescribed and granted unto his church. See Jer. l. 4, 5.

12. This completes the confederation intended, which is the formal cause of the church; and without which, either expressly or virtually performed, there can be no church-state.

13. Indeed, herein most men deceive themselves, and think they do not that, nor that it ought to be done, and dispute against it as unlawful or unnecessary, which for the substance of it they do themselves, and would condemn themselves in their own consciences, if they did it not. For unto what end do they join themselves unto parochial churches and assemblies? To what end do they require all professors of the Protestant religion so to do, declaring it to be their duty by penalties annexed unto its neglect? Is it not, that they might yield obedience unto Christ in their so doing? Is it not to profess that they will do and observe all whatsoever he commands them? Is it not to do it in that society, in those assemblies, whereunto they do belong? Is there not therein virtually a mutual agreement and engage-

ment among them unto all those ends? It must be so with them, who do not in all things in religion fight uncertainly as men beating the air.

14. Now, whereas these things are in themselves, and for the substance of them, known gospel duties, which all believers are indispensably obliged unto; the more express our engagement is concerning them, the more do we glorify Christ in our profession, and the greater sense of our duty will abide on our consciences, and greater encouragement be given unto the performance of mutual duties; as also the more evident will the warranty be, for the exercise of church-power. Yet do I not deny the being of churches unto those societies, wherein these things are virtually only observed; especially in churches of some continuance, wherein there is at least an implicit consent unto the first covenant-constitution.

15. The Lord Christ having instituted and appointed officers, rulers, or leaders in his church (as we shall see in the next place), to look unto the discharge of all church-duties among the members of it, to administer and dispense all its privileges, and to exercise all its authority, the consent and engagement insisted on is expressly required unto the constitution of this order and the preservation of it. For without this, no believer can be brought into that relation unto another as his pastor, guide, overseer, ruler unto the ends mentioned, wherein he must be subject unto him, partake of all ordinances of divine worship administered by him with authority, in obedience unto the will of Christ: 'They gave their ownselves to us' (saith the apostle) 'by the will of God.'

16. Wherefore, the formal cause of a church consisteth in an obedientiall act of believers, in such numbers as may be useful unto the ends of church edification, jointly giving up themselves unto the Lord Jesus Christ, to do and observe all his commands, resting on the promise of his especial presence thereon; giving and communicating by his law, all the rights, powers, and privileges of his church unto them; and in a mutual agreement among themselves, jointly to perform all the duties required of them in that state, with an especial subjection unto the spiritual authority of rules and rulers appointed by Christ in that state.

17. There is nothing herein, which any man who hath a conscientious sense of his duty in a professed subjection unto the gospel, can question for the substance of it, whether it be according to the mind of Christ or no. And whereas the nature and essential properties of a divine covenant are contained in them, as such it is a foundation of any church-state.

18. Thus under the Old Testament, when God would take the posterity of Abraham into a new peculiar church-state, he did it by a solemn covenant. Herein, as he prescribed all the duties of his worship to them, and made them many blessed promises of his presence, with powers and privileges innumerable; so the people solemnly covenanted and engaged with him, that they would do and observe all that he had commanded them; whereby they coalesced into that church-state, which abode unto the time of reformation. This covenant is at large declared, Exod. xxiv. For the covenant which God made there with the people, and they with him, was not the covenant of grace under a legal dispensation; for that was established unto the seed of Abraham four hundred years before in the promise, with the seal of circumcision; nor was it the covenant of works under a gospel dispensation; for God never renewed that covenant under any consideration whatever. But it was a peculiar covenant which God then 'made with them, and had not made it with their fathers;' Deut. v. 2, 3. whereby they were raised and erected into a church-state, wherein they were intrusted with all the privileges, and enjoined all the duties which God had annexed thereunto. This covenant was the sole formal cause of their church-state, which they are charged so often to have broken, and which they so often solemnly renewed unto God.

19. This was that covenant which was to be abolished, whereon the church-state that was built thereon, was utterly taken away. For hereon the Hebrews ceased to be the peculiar church of God, because the covenant whereby they were made so, was abolished and taken away, as the apostle disputes at large, Heb. vii. 8, 9. The covenant of grace in the promise will still continue unto the true seed of Abraham; Acts ii. 38, 39. But the church covenant was utterly taken away.

20. Upon the removal therefore of this covenant, and the church-state founded thereon, all duties of worship and church privileges were also taken away (the things substituted in their room being totally of another kind). But the covenant of grace, as made with Abraham, being continued and transferred unto the gospel worshippers, the sign or token of it given unto him is changed; but another substituted in the room thereof. But whereas the privileges of this church covenant were in themselves carnal only, and no way spiritual, but as they were typical; and the duties prescribed in it were burdensome, yea, a yoke intolerable; the apostle declares in the same place, that the new church-state, whereinto we are called by the gospel, hath no duties belonging unto it but such as are spiritual and easy; but withal, hath such holy and eminent privileges as the church could no way enjoy by virtue of the first church covenant; nor could believers be made partakers of them before that covenant was abolished. Wherefore,

21. The same way for the erection of a church-state for the participation of the more excellent privileges of the gospel, and performance of the duties of it, for the substance of it, must still be continued. For the constitution of such a society as a church is, intrusted with powers and privileges by a covenant or mutual consent, with an engagement unto the performance of the duties belonging unto it, hath its foundation in the light of nature, so far as it hath any thing in common with other voluntary relations and societies; was instituted by God himself, as the way and means of erecting the church-state of the Old Testament; and consisteth in the performance of such duties as are expressly required of all believers.

CHAP. III.

Of the polity, rule, or discipline of the church in general.

I. The things last treated of concern the essence of the church, or the essential constituent parts of it, according unto the appointment of Christ. It remains in the next place, that we should treat of it as it is organical, or a body

corporate; a spiritually political society, for the exercise of the powers wherewith it is intrusted by Christ, and the due performance of the duties which he requires. Now, whereas it is brought into this estate, by the setting, fixing, or placing officers in it, method would require that we should first treat of them, their nature, names, power, and the ways of coming unto their offices. But, whereas all things concerning them are founded in the grant of power unto the church itself, and the institution of polity and rule therein by Jesus Christ, I shall first treat somewhat thereof in general.

That which we intend, on various considerations and in divers respects, is called the power or authority, the polity, the rule, the government, and the discipline of the church. The formal nature of it is its authority or power. Its polity is skill and wisdom to act that power unto its proper ends. Its rule is the actual exercise of that power, according unto that skill and wisdom. Its government is the exercise and application of that authority according unto that skill, towards those that are its proper objects. And it is called its discipline, principally with respect unto its end. Yet is it not material whether these things are thus accurately distinguished; the same thing is intended in them all, which I shall call the rule of the church.

II. The rule of the church is in general The exercise of the power or authority of Jesus Christ, given unto it according unto the laws and directions prescribed by himself unto its edification. This power in 'actu primo,' or fundamentally, is in the church itself; in 'actu secundo,' or its exercise, in them that are especially called thereunto. Whether that which is now called the rule of the church by some, being a plain secular dominion, have any affinity hereunto, is justly doubted. That it is in itself the acting of the authority of Christ, wherein the power of men is ministerial only, is evident For, (1.) All this authority in and over the church is vested in him alone. (2.) It is over the souls and consciences of men only, which no authority can reach but his, and that as it is his; whereof we shall treat more afterward.

The sole end of the ministerial exercise of this power and rule, by virtue thereof unto the church, is the edifica-

tion of itself; Rom. xv. 1—3. 2 Cor. x. 8. xiii. 10. Eph. iv. 14, 15.

III. This is the especial nature and especial end of all power granted by Jesus Christ unto the church; namely, a ministry unto edification, in opposition unto all the ends whereunto it hath been abused. For it hath been so unto the usurpation of a dominion over the persons and consciences of the disciples of Christ, accompanied with secular grandeur, wealth, and power. The Lord Christ never made a grant of any authority for any such ends; yea, they are expressly forbidden by him, Luke xxii. 25. Matt. xx. 26—28. 'Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.'

All the pleas of the Romanists are utterly insufficient to secure their papal domination from this sword of the mouth of the Lord Jesus. For, whereas their utmost pretence and defence consists in this, That it is not dominion and power absolutely that is forbidden, but the unlawful, tyrannical, oppressive exercise of power, such as was in use among the princes of the Gentiles; never was there any dominion in the world, no not among the Gentiles, more cruel, oppressive, and bloody, than that of the pope's hath been. But it is evident, that our Lord Jesus Christ doth not in the least reflect on the rule or government of the kings and princes of the Gentiles, which was good and righteous: yea, he speaks of them in an especial manner, whom their subjects, for their moderate and equal rule, with their usefulness unto their countries, called εὐεργέται, or 'benefactors.' Their rule, as unto the kind and administration of it in the kingdoms of the world, he approves of. And such a power or pre-eminence it was, namely, good and just in itself, not tyrannical and oppressive, that the two disciples desired in his kingdom, which gave occasion unto this declaration of the nature of his kingdom, and the rule thereof. For in this power or dominion two things may be considered. (1.) The exercise

of it over the persons, goods, and lives of men, by courts, coercive jurisdictions, processes of law, and external force in punishments. (2.) The state, grandeur, pre-eminence, wealth, exaltation above others, which are necessary unto the maintenance of their authority and power. Both these in the least participation of them, in the least degree whatever, are forbidden by our Saviour to be admitted in his kingdom, or to have any place therein, on what pretence soever. He will have nothing of lordship, domination, pre-eminence in lordly power in his church. No courts, no coercive jurisdictions, no exercise of any human authority doth he allow therein; for by these means do the princes of the Gentiles, those that are the benefactors of their countries, rule among them. And this is most evident from what in opposition hereunto he prescribes unto his own disciples, the greatest, the best in office, grace, and gifts; namely a ministry only, to be discharged in the way of service. How well this great command and direction of our Lord Jesus Christ hath been and is complied withal, by those who have taken on them to be rulers in the church, is sufficiently known.

Wherefore there is no rule of the church but what is ministerial, consisting in an authoritative declaration and application of the commands and will of Christ unto the souls of men, wherein, those who exercise it are 'servants unto the church for its edification, for Jesus' sake;' 2 Cor. iv. 5.

It hence follows, that the introduction of human authority into the rule of the church of Christ in any kind, destroyeth the nature of it, and makes his kingdom to be of this world, and some of his disciples to be in their measure like the princes of the Gentiles; nor is it ofttimes from themselves, that they are not more like them than they are. The church is the house of Christ, his family, his kingdom. To act any power in its rule, which is not his, which derives not from him, which is not communicated by his legal grant; or to act any power, by ways, processes, rules, and laws not of his appointment, is an invasion of his right and dominion. It can no otherwise be, if the church be his family, his house, his kingdom. For what father would endure that any power should be exercised in his family as to the dis-

posal of his children and estate, but his own? What earthly prince will bear with such an intrusion into his rights and dominion? Foreign papal power is severely excluded here in England, because it intrenches on the rights of the crown, by the exercise of an authority and jurisdiction not derived from the king according unto the law of the land. And we should do well to take care that at the same time we do not encroach upon the dominion of Christ, by the exercise of an authority not derived from him, or by laws and rules not enacted by him, but more foreign unto his kingdom, than the canon law or the pope's rule is unto the laws of this nation, lest we fall under the statute of præmunire; Matt. xx. 26—28. The power of rule in the church, then, is nothing but a right to yield obedience unto the commands of Christ, in such a way, by such rules, and for such ends, as wherein and whereby his authority is to be acted.

The persons concerned in this rule of the church, both those that rule and those that are to be ruled, as unto all their civil and political concerns in this world, are subject unto the civil government of the kingdoms and places wherein they inhabit. And there are sundry things which concern the outward state and condition of the church that are at the disposal of the governors of this world: but, whereas the power to be exercised in the church is merely spiritual as unto its objects, which are the consciences of men; and as unto its ends, which are the tendency of their souls unto God, their spiritual obedience in Christ and eternal life, it is a frenzy to dream of any other power or authority in this rule, but that of Christ alone.

To sum up this discourse; if the rulers of the church, the greatest of them, have only a ministerial power committed unto them, and are precisely limited thereunto; if in the exercise thereof they are servants of the church unto its edification; if all lordly domination in an exaltation above the church or the members of it, in dignity and authority of this world, and the exercise of power by external coercive jurisdiction, be forbidden unto them; if the whole power and rule of the church be spiritual and not carnal, mighty through God and not through the laws of men; and be to be exercised by spiritual means for spiritual ends only; it is apparent how it hath been lost in, or cast out of the world,

for the introduction of a lordly domination, a secular coercive jurisdiction, with laws and powers no way derived from Christ, in the room thereof. Neither is it possible for any man alive to reconcile the present government of some churches, either as unto the officers who have the administration of that rule, or the rules and laws whereby they act and proceed, or powers which they exercise, or the jurisdiction which they claim, or the manner of their proceeding in its administration, unto any tolerable consistency with the principles, rules, and laws of the government of the church given by Christ himself. And this alone is a sufficient reason why those who endeavour to preserve their loyalty entire unto Jesus Christ, should in their own practice seek after the reduction of the rule of the church unto his commands and appointments; in the public disposals of nations we have no concernment.

IV. Whereas therefore there is a power and authority for its rule unto edification, given and committed by the Lord Christ unto his church, I shall proceed to inquire how this power is communicated, what it is, and to whom it is granted, which shall be declared in the ensuing observations.

1. There was an extraordinary church power committed by the Lord Jesus Christ unto his apostles, who in their own persons were the first and only subject of it. It was not granted unto the church, by it to be communicated unto them according unto any rules prescribed thereunto. For their office, as it was apostolical, was antecedent unto the existence of any gospel church-state properly so called; neither had any church the least concurrence or influence into their call or mission. Howbeit, when there was a church-state, the churches being called and gathered by their ministry, they were given unto the church, and placed in the church for the exercise of all office, with power unto their edification according to the rules and laws of their constitution; Acts i. 14, 15. vi. 1—4. 1 Cor. iii. 22. xii. 28. Eph. iv. 11—14.

2. This power is ceased in the church. It is so, not by virtue of any law or constitution of Christ; but by a cessation of those actings whence it did flow, and whereon it did depend. For unto this apostolical office and power there was required, (1.) An immediate personal call from Christ

himself. (2.) A commission equally extensive unto all nations for their conversion, and unto all churches equally for their edification. (3.) An authority in all churches, comprehensive of all that power which is in the ordinary constitution of them, distributed among many. (4.) A collation of extraordinary gifts; as of infallibility in teaching, of working miracles, speaking with tongues, and the like. Whereas therefore all these things do cease, and the Lord Christ doth not act in the same manner towards any, this office and power doth absolutely cease. For any to pretend themselves to be successors unto these apostles, as some with a strange confidence and impertinency have done, is to plead that they are personally and immediately called by Christ unto their office, that they have authority with respect unto all nations and all churches, and are indued with a spirit of infallibility and a power of working miracles, whereof outward pomp and ostentation are no sufficient evidences. And certainly, when some of them consider one another, and talk of being the apostles' successors, it is but 'Aruspex aruspicens.'

3. Least of all in the ordinary state of the church, and the continuation thereof, hath the Lord Christ appointed a vicar, or rather as is pretended, a successor, with a plenitude of all church-power, to be by him parcelled out unto others. This is that which hath overthrown all church-rule and order, introducing Luciferian pride and antichristian tyranny in their room. And whereas the only way of Christ's acting his authority over the churches, and of communicating authority unto them, to be acted by them in his name, is by his word and Spirit, which he hath given to continue in his church unto that end unto the consummation of all things, the pope of Rome placing himself in his stead for these ends, doth thereby sit in the temple of God, and shew himself to be God. But this is sufficiently confuted among all sober Christians; and those who embrace it, may be left to contend with the Mahometans, who affirm, that Jesus left John the Baptist to be his successor, as Haly succeeded unto Mahomet.

4. All those, by whom the ordinary rule of the church is to be exercised unto its edification, are, as unto their office and power, given unto the church, set or placed in it, not as

'lords of their faith, but as helpers of their joy;' 1 Cor. ii. 2. iii. 21—23. 2 Cor. i. 24. Eph. iv. 11—14. 1 Pet. v. 1, 2. For the church is the spouse of Christ, the Lamb's wife; and by virtue of that relation the enfeoffment into this power is her due and dowry; all particular persons are but her servants for Christ's sake. For though some of them be stewards, and set over all their fellow-servants, yet he hath not given them the trust of power to rule his spouse at their own will, and to grant what they please unto her.

5. But as this whole church-power is committed unto the whole church by Christ, so all that are called unto the peculiar exercise of any part of it, by virtue of office-authority, do receive that authority from him by the only way of the communication of it, namely, by his word and Spirit through the ministry of the church, whereof we shall treat afterward.

V. These things being thus premised in general concerning church-power, we must treat yet particularly of the communication of it from Christ, and of its distribution as unto its residence in the church.

1. Every individual believer hath power or right given unto him upon his believing to 'become a son of God;' John i. 12. Hereby, as such, he hath a right and title radically and originally unto, with an interest in, all church privileges, to be actually possessed and used according to the rules by him prescribed. For he that is 'a son of God' hath a right unto all the privileges and advantages of the family of God, as well as he is obliged unto all the duties of it. Herein lies the foundation of all right unto church-power, for both it, and all that belongs unto it, is a part of the purchased inheritance, whereunto right is granted by adoption; wherefore, the first original grant of all church-power and privileges is made unto believers as such. Theirs it is with these two limitations; (1.) That as such only they cannot exercise any church-power, but upon their due observation of all rules and duties given unto this end; such are joint confession and confederation. (2.) That each individual, do actually participate therein, according to the especial rules of the church, which peculiarly respects women that do believe.

2. Wherever there are two or three of these believers (the smallest number), right and power is granted unto them,

actually to meet together in the name of Christ, for their mutual edification, whereunto he hath promised his presence among them; Matt. xviii. 19, 20. To meet and to do anything in the name of Christ; as to exhort, instruct, and admonish one another, or to pray together, as ver. 19. there is an especial right or power required thereunto. This is granted by Jesus Christ unto the least number of consenting believers. And this is a second preparation unto the communication of church-power. Unto the former, faith only is required; unto this, profession, with mutual consent unto, and agreement in, the evangelical duties mentioned, are to be added.

3. Where the number of believers is increased, so as that they are sufficient as unto their number to observe and perform all church duties in the way and manner prescribed for their performance, they have right and power granted unto them, to make a joint solemn confession of their faith, especially as unto the person of Christ and his mediation; Matt. xvi. 16. 18. as also to give up themselves unto him and to one another, in a holy agreement or confederation to do and observe all things whatever that he hath commanded. Hereon, by virtue of his laws in his institutions and commands, he gives them power to do all things in their order which he grants unto his church, and instates them in all the rights and privileges thereof. These believers, I say, thus congregated into a church-state, have immediately, by virtue thereof, power to take care that all things be done among them, as by the Lord Christ they are commanded to be done, in and by his church.

This therefore is the church essential and homogeneal, unto which the Lord Christ hath granted all that church-power which we inquire after, made it the seat of all ordinances of his worship, and the tabernacle wherein he will dwell. Nor, since the ceasing of extraordinary officers, is there any other way possible for the congregating of any church than what doth virtually include the things we have mentioned.

4. But yet this church-state is not complete; nor are the ends of its institution attainable in this state. For the Lord Christ hath appointed such things in and unto it, which in this state it cannot observe. For he hath given

authority unto his church to be exercised both in its rule and in the administration of his solemn ordinances of worship. The things before mentioned are all of them acts of right and power, but not of authority.

5. Wherefore the Lord Christ hath ordained offices, and appointed officers to be established in the church; Eph. iv. 13, 14. Unto these is all church authority granted. For all authority is an act of office-power, which is that which gives unto what is performed by the officers of the church, the formal nature of authority.

6. Therefore unto the church, in the state before described, right and power is granted by Christ to call, choose, appoint, and set apart persons made meet for the work of the offices appointed by him, in the ways and by the means appointed by him. Nor is there any other way whereby ordinary officers may be fixed in the church, as we have proved before, and shall farther confirm afterward.

That which hereon we must inquire into, is, How or by what means, or by what acts of his sovereign power, the Lord Christ doth communicate office-power, and therewith the office itself, unto any persons whereon their authority is directly from him; and what are the acts or duties of the church in the collation of this authority.

The acts of Christ herein may be reduced unto these heads:

1. He hath instituted and appointed the offices themselves, and made a grant of them unto the church for its edification. As also, he hath determined and limited the powers and duties of the officers. It is not in the power of any or of all the churches in the world, to appoint any office or officer in the church, that Christ hath not appointed. And where there are any such, they can have no church authority properly so called; for that entirely riseth from, and is resolved into, the institution of the office by Christ himself. And hence, in the first place, all the authority of officers in the church proceeds from the authority of Christ in the institution of the office itself; for that which gives being unto any thing, gives it also its essential properties.

2. By virtue of his relation unto the church as its head, of his kingly power over it and care of it, whereon the continuation and edification of the church in this world do de-

pend; wherever he hath a church called, he furnisheth some persons with such gifts, abilities, and endowments, as are necessary to the discharge of such offices, in the powers, works, and duties of them. For it is most unquestionably evident, both in the nature of the thing itself, and in his institution, that there are some especial abilities and qualifications required to the discharge of every church-office. Wherefore, where the Lord Christ doth not communicate of these abilities in such a measure as by virtue of them church-order may be observed, church-power exercised, and all church-ordinances administered according to his mind unto the edification of the church, it is no more in the power of men to constitute officers, than to erect or create an office in the church; Eph. iv. 11—13. 1 Cor. xii. 4—8, &c. Rom. xii. 6.

This collation of spiritual gifts and abilities for office by Jesus Christ unto any, doth not immediately constitute all those, or any of them, officers in the church, on whom they are collated, without the observation of that method and order which he hath appointed in the church for the communication of office-power; yet is it so pre-requisite thereunto, that no person not made partaker of them in the measure before mentioned, can, by virtue of any outward rites, order, or power, be really vested in the ministry.

3. This communication of office-power on the part of Christ, consists in his institution and appointment of the way and means, whereby persons gifted and qualified by himself, ought to be actually admitted into their offices, so as to administer the powers, and perform the duties of them. For the way of their call and ordination, whereof we shall speak afterward, is efficacious unto this end of communicating office-power, merely from his institution and appointment of it. And what is not so, can have no causal influence into the communication of this power. For although sundry things belonging hereunto are directed by the light of nature, as it is, that where one man is set over others in power and authority, which before he had no natural right unto, it should be by their own consent and choice. And some things are of a moral nature, as that especial prayer be used in and about affairs that need es-

pecial divine assistance and favour; and there may be some circumstances of outward actions herein, not to be determined but by the rule of reason on the present posture of occasions; yet nothing hath any causal influence into the communication of office-power, but what is of the institution and appointment of Christ. By virtue hereof, all that are called unto this office, do derive all their power and authority from him alone.

4. He hath hereon given commands unto the whole church to submit themselves unto the authority of these officers in the discharge of their office, who are so appointed, so prepared or qualified, so called by himself, and to obey them in all things, according unto the limitations which himself also hath given unto the power and authority of such officers. For they who are called unto rule and authority in the church by virtue of their office, are not thereon admitted unto an unlimited power to be exercised at their pleasure in a lordly or despotical manner; but their power is stated, bounded, limited, and confined as to the objects of it, its acts, its manner of administration, its ends, and as unto all things wherein it is concerned. The swelling over these banks by ambition, the breaking up of these bounds by pride and love of domination, by the introduction of a power over the persons of men in their outward concerns, exercised in a legal, coercive, lordly manner, are sufficient to make a forfeiture of all church-power in them who are guilty of them. But after that some men saw it fit to transgress the bounds of power and authority prescribed and limited unto them by the Lord Christ; which was really exclusive of lordship, dominion, and all elation above their brethren, leaving them servants to the church for Christ's sake, they began to prescribe bounds unto themselves, such as were suited unto their interest, which they called rules or canons, and never left enlarging them at their pleasure, until they instated the most absolute tyranny in and over the church, that ever was in the world.

By these ways and means doth the Lord Christ communicate office-power unto them that are called thereunto, whereon they become not the officers or ministers of men, no, not of the church, as unto the actings and exercise of

their authority, but only as the good and edification of the church is the end of it; but the officers and ministers of Christ himself.

2. It is hence evident, that in the communication of church-power in office unto any persons called thereunto, the work and duty of the church consists formally in acts of obedience unto the commands of Christ. Hence, it doth not give unto such officers a power or authority that was formally and actually in the body of the community, by virtue of any grant or law of Christ, so as that they should receive and act the power of the church, by virtue of a delegation from them; but only they design, choose, set apart the individual persons, who thereon are intrusted with office-power by Christ himself, according as was before declared. This is the power and right given unto the church essentially considered with respect unto their officers, namely, to design, call, choose, and set apart the persons by the ways of Christ's appointment unto those offices, whereunto by his laws he hath annexed church-power and authority.

We need not therefore trouble ourselves with the disputes about the first subject of church-power, or any part of it. For it is a certain rule, That in the performance of all duties which the Lord Christ requires, either of the whole church, or of any in the church, especially of the officers, they are the first subject of the power needful unto such duties, who are immediately called unto them. Hereby all things become to be done in the name and authority of Christ. For the power of the church is nothing but a right to perform church-duties in obedience unto the commands of Christ, and according unto his mind. Wherefore all church-power is originally given unto the church essentially considered, which hath a double exercise: First, In the call or choosing of officers; Secondly, In their voluntary acting with them and under them in all duties of rule. (1.) All authority in the church is committed by Christ unto the officers or rulers of it, as unto all acts and duties whereunto office-power is required; and, (2.) Every individual person hath the liberty of his own judgment, as unto his own consent or dissent in what he is himself concerned.

That this power under the name of the 'keys of the king-

dom of heaven' was originally granted unto the whole professing church of believers, and that it is utterly impossible it should reside in any other who is subject unto death, or if so, be renewed upon any occasional intermission, is so fully proved by all Protestant writers against the Papists, that it needs not on this occasion be again insisted on.

VI. These things have been spoken concerning the polity of the church in general, as it is taken objectively for the constitution of its state, and the laws of its rule; we are in the next place to consider it subjectively, as it is a power or faculty of the minds of men, unto whom the rule of the church is committed. And in this sense it is the wisdom or understanding of the officers of the church, to exercise the government in it appointed by Jesus Christ, or to rule it according to his laws and constitutions. Or,

This wisdom is a spiritual gift (1 Cor. xii. 9.) whereby the officers of the church are enabled to make a due application of all the rules and laws of Christ, unto the edification of the church and all the members of it.

Unto the attaining of this wisdom, are required, (1.) Fervent prayer for it; James i. 5. (2.) Diligent study of the Scripture, to find out and understand the rules given by Christ unto this purpose; Ezra vii. 6, 7. 9. 1 Tim. ii. 14, 15. (3.) Humble waiting on God for the revelation of all that it is to be exercised about; Ezek. xliii. 11. (4.) A conscientious exercise of the skill which they have received: talents traded with duly will increase. (5.) A continual sense of the account which is to be given of the discharge of this great trust, being called to rule in the house of God; Heb. xiii. 17.

How much this wisdom hath been neglected in church-government; yea, how much it is despised in the world, is evident unto all. It is skill in the canon law, in the proceedings of vexatious courts, with the learning, subtilty, and arts which are required thereunto, that is looked on as the only skill to be exercised in the government of the church. Without this a man is esteemed no way meet to be employed in any part of the church-government. And according as any do arrive unto a dexterity in this polity, they are esteemed eminently useful. But these things belong not at all unto the government of the church appointed

by Christ; nor can any sober man think in his conscience that so they do. What is the use of this art and trade, as unto political ends, we inquire not. Nor is the true wisdom required unto this end, with the means of attaining of it, more despised, more neglected by any sort of men in the world, than by those whose pretences unto ecclesiastical rule and authority would make it most necessary unto them.

Two things follow on the supposition laid down.

1. That the wisdom intended is not promised unto all the members of the church in general; nor are they required to seek for it by the ways and means of attaining it before laid down; but respect is had herein only unto the officers of the church. Hereon dependeth the equity of the obedience of the people unto their rulers. For wisdom for rule is peculiarly granted unto them, and their duty it is to seek after it in a peculiar manner. Wherefore, those who on every occasion are ready to advance their own wisdom and understanding in the affairs and proceedings of the church, against the wisdom of the officers of it, are proud and disorderly.

I speak not this to give any countenance unto the outcries of some, that all sorts of men will suppose themselves wiser than their rulers, and to know what belongs unto the government of the church better than they; whereas the government which they exercise belongs not at all unto the rule of the church, determined and limited in the Scripture, as the meanest Christian can easily discern; nor is it pretended by themselves so to do. For they say that the Lord Christ hath prescribed nothing herein, but left it unto the will and wisdom of the church to order all things as they see necessary, which church they are. Wherefore, if that will please them, it shall be granted, that in skill for the management of ecclesiastical affairs according to the canon law, with such other rules of the same kind as they have framed, and in the legal proceedings of ecclesiastical courts, as they are called, there are none of the people that are equal unto them, or will contend with them.

2. It hence also follows, that those who are called unto rule in the church of Christ, should diligently endeavour the attaining of, and increasing in this wisdom, giving evidence thereof on all occasions, that the church may

safely acquiesce in their rule. But hereunto so many things do belong, as cannot in this place be meetly treated of; somewhat that appertains to them shall afterward be considered.

CHAP. IV.

The officers of the church.

THE church is considered either as it is essential with respect unto its nature and being; or as it is organical with respect unto its order.

The constituent causes and parts of the church, as unto its essence and being, are its institution, matter, and form; whereof we have treated.

Its order, as it is organical, is founded in that communication of power unto it from Christ, which was insisted on in the foregoing chapter.

The organizing of a church, is the placing or implanting in it those officers which the Lord Jesus Christ hath appointed to act and exercise his authority therein.

For the rule and government of the church, are the exertion of the authority of Christ in the hands of them unto whom it is committed, that is, the officers of it; not that all officers are called to rule, but that none are called to rule that are not so.

The officers of the church in general are of two sorts; 'bishops and deacons;' Phil. i. 1. And their work is distributed into 'prophecy and ministry;' Rom. xii. 6, 7.

The bishops or elders are of two sorts; (1.) Such as have authority to teach and administer the sacraments, which is commonly called the power of order, and also of ruling, which is called a power of jurisdiction corruptly: and some have only power for rule; of which sort, there are some in all the churches in the world.

Those of the first sort are distinguished into pastors and teachers.

The distinction between the elders themselves, is not like that between elders and deacons, which is as unto the whole

kind or nature of the office; but only with respect unto work and order, whereof we shall treat distinctly.

The first sort of officers in the church, are bishops or elders; concerning whom there have been mighty contentions in the late ages of the church. The principles we have hitherto proceeded on, discharge us from any especial interest or concernment in this controversy. For if there be no church of divine or apostolical constitution, none in being in the second or third centuries, but only a particular congregation, the foundation of that contest which is about preeminence and power in the same person over many churches, falls to the ground.

Indeed, strife about power, superiority, and jurisdiction over one another, amongst those who pretend to be ministers of the gospel, is full of scandal. It started early in the church; was extinguished by the Lord Christ in his apostles; rebuked by the apostles in all others;[r] yet through the pride, ambition, and avarice of men, hath grown to be the stain and shame of the church in most ages. For neither the sense of the authority of Christ forbidding such ambitious designings, nor the proposal of his own example in this particular case; nor the experience of their own insufficiency for the least part of the work of the gospel ministry, have been able to restrain the minds of men from coveting after and contending for a prerogative in church-power over others. For though this ambition, and all the fruits or rewards of it, are laid under a severe interdict by our Lord Jesus Christ, yet when men (like Achan) saw the wedge of gold, and the goodly Babylonish garment, that they thought to be in power, domination, and wealth, they coveted them, and took them, to the great disturbance of the church of God.

If men would but a little seriously consider what there is in that care of souls, even of all them over whom they pretend church-power, rule, or jurisdiction; and what it is to give an account concerning them before the judgment-seat of Christ, it may be it would abate of their earnestness in contending for the enlargement of their cures.

The claim of episcopacy, as consisting in a rank of persons distinct from the office of presbyters, is managed with great variety. It is not agreed whether they are distinct in

[r] Matt. xviii. 1—4. xxiii. 7—11. Luke xxii. 24—27. 1 Pet. v. 1—5. 2 John 9, 10.

order above them, or only as unto a certain degree among them of the same order. It is not determined, what doth constitute that pretended distinct order, nor wherein that degree of pre-eminence in the same order doth consist, nor what basis it stands upon. It is not agreed whether this order of bishops hath any church-power appropriated unto it, so as to be acted singly by themselves alone, without the concurrence of the presbyters; or how far that concurrence is necessary in all acts of church-order or power. There are no bounds or limits of the diocesses which they claim the rule in and over, as churches whereunto they are peculiarly related, derived either from divine institution, or tradition, or general rules of reason respecting both or either of them; or from the consideration of gifts and abilities, or any thing else wherein church-order or edification is concerned. Those who plead for diocesan episcopacy, will not proceed any farther, but only that there is and ought to be a superiority in bishops over presbyters in order or degree. But whether this must be over presbyters in one church only, or in many distinct churches; whether it must be such, as not only hinders them utterly from the discharge of any of the duties of the pastoral office towards the most of them whom they esteem their flocks, and necessitates them unto a rule by unscriptural church officers, laws, and power, they suppose doth not belong unto their cause; whereas indeed the weight and moment of it doth lie in and depend on these things. Innumerable other uncertainties, differences, and variances there are about this singular episcopacy, which we are not at present concerned to inquire into, nor shall I insist on any of those which have been already mentioned.

But yet, because it is necessary unto the clearing of the evangelical pastoral office, which is now under consideration; unto what hath been pleaded before about the non-institution of any churches beyond particular congregations, which is utterly exclusive of all pretences of the present episcopacy, I shall briefly, as in a diversion, add the arguments which undeniably prove, that in the whole New Testament, bishops and presbyters, or elders, are every way the same persons, in the same office, have the same function, without distinction in order or degree; which also, as unto the Scripture, the most learned advocates of prelacy begin to grant.

1. The apostle describing what ought to be the qualifications of presbyters or elders, gives this reason of it, because a bishop must be so; Tit. i. 5—7. 'Ordain elders in every city, if any be blameless, &c. for a bishop must be blameless.' He that would prove of what sort a presbyter that is to be ordained so, ought to be, gives this reason for it, That such a bishop ought to be, intends the same person and office by presbyter and bishop, or there is no congruity of speech, or consequence of reason in what he asserts. To suppose that the apostle doth not intend the same persons and the same office by presbyters and bishops in the same place, is to destroy his argument, and render the context of his discourse unintelligible. He that will say, that if you make a justice of peace or a constable, he must be magnanimous, liberal, full of clemency and courage, for so a king ought to be, will not be thought to argue very wisely. Yet such is the argument here, if by elders and bishops distinct orders and offices are intended.

2. There were many bishops in one city in one particular church; Phil. i. 1. 'To all the saints that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.' That the church then at Philippi was one particular church or congregation was proved before. But to have many bishops in the same church, whereas the nature of the episcopacy pleaded for consists in the superiority of one over the presbyters of many churches, is absolutely inconsistent. Such bishops, whereof there may be many in the same church, of the same order, equal in power and dignity with respect unto office, will easily be granted; but then they are presbyters as well as bishops. There will, I fear, be no end of this contest, because of the prejudices and interests of some; but that the identity of bishops and presbyters should be more plainly expressed, can neither be expected nor desired.

3. The apostle being at Miletus, sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church to come unto him, that is, the elders of the church at Ephesus, as hath been elsewhere undeniably demonstrated; Acts xx. 17, 18. unto these elders he says, 'Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the church of God;' ver. 28. If elders and bishops be not the same persons, having the same office, the same function, and the

same duties, and the same names, it is impossible, so far as I understand, how it should be expressed. For these elders are they whom the Holy Ghost made bishops; they were many of them in the same church; their duty it was to attend unto the flock, and to feed the church, which comprise all the duties, the whole function of elders and bishops, which must therefore be the same. This plain testimony can no way be evaded by pretences and conjectures unwritten and uncertain; the only answer unto it, is, it was indeed so then, but it was otherwise afterward; which some now betake themselves unto. But these elders were either elders only and not bishops; or bishops only and not elders; or the same persons were elders and bishops, as is plainly affirmed in the words. The latter is that which we plead. If the first be asserted, then was there no bishop then at Ephesus; for these elders had the whole oversight of the flock: if the second, then were there no elders at all, which is no good exposition of those words, that 'Paul called unto him the elders of the church.'

4. The apostle Peter writes unto the elders of the churches, that they should feed the flock, ἐπισκοποῦντες, taking the oversight, or exercising the office and function of bishops over them, and that not as lords but as ensamples (of humility, obedience, and holiness) to the whole flock; 1 Pet. v. 1—3. Those on whom it is incumbent to feed the flock, and to superintend over it, as those who in the first place are accountable unto Jesus Christ, are bishops; and such as have no other bishop over them, unto whom this charge should be principally committed. But such, according unto this apostle, are the elders of the church. Wherefore, these elders and bishops are the same. And such were the ἡγούμενοι, the guides of the church at Jerusalem, whom the members of it were bound to obey, as those that did watch for, and were to give an account of their souls. Heb. xiii. 17.

5. The substance of these and all other instances or testimonies of the same kind, is this; Those whose names are the same, equally common and applicable unto them all, whose function is the same, whose qualifications and characters are the same, whose duties, account, and reward are the same, concerning whom there is in no one place of Scripture

the least mention of inequality, disparity, or preference in office among them, they are essentially and every way the same. That thus it is with the elders and bishops in the Scripture cannot modestly be denied.

I do acknowledge that where a church is greatly increased, so as that there is a necessity of many elders in it for its instruction and rule, that decency and order do require, that one of them do in the management of all church affairs preside, to guide and direct the way and manner thereof. So the presbyters at Alexandria did choose one from among themselves that should have the pre-eminence of a president among them. Whether the person that is so to preside, be directed unto by being first converted or first ordained, or on the account of age, or of gifts and abilities, whether he continue for a season only, and then another be deputed unto the same work, or for his life, are things in themselves indifferent, to be determined according unto the general rules of reason and order, with respect unto the edification of the church.

I shall never oppose this order, but rather desire to see it in practice; namely, that particular churches were of such an extent, as necessarily to require many elders both teaching and ruling for their instruction and government; for the better observation of order and decency in the public assemblies; the fuller representation of the authority committed by Jesus Christ unto the officers of his church; the occasional instruction of the members in lesser assemblies, which as unto some ends may be stated also, with the due attendance unto all other means of edification and watching, inspecting, warning, admonishing, exhorting, and the like; and that among these elders one should be chosen by themselves, with the consent of the church, not into a new order, not into a degree of authority above his brethren, but only unto his part of the common work in a peculiar manner, which requires some kind of precedency. Hereby no new officer, no new order of officers, no new degree of power or authority is constituted in the church; only the work and duty of it is cast into such an order, as the very light of nature doth require.

But there is not any intimation in the Scripture of the least imparity or inequality, in order, degree, or authority,

among officers of the same sort, whether extraordinary or ordinary. The apostles were all equal: so were the evangelists, so were elders or bishops, and so were deacons also. The Scripture knows no more of an archbishop, such as all diocesan bishops are, nor an archdeacon, than of an arch-apostle, or of an arch-evangelist, or an arch-prophet. Howbeit, it is evident, that in all their assemblies, they had one who did preside in the manner before described, which seems among the apostles to have been the prerogative of Peter.

The brethren also of the church may be so multiplied, as that the constant meeting of them all in one place may not be absolutely best for their edification. Howbeit, that on all the solemn occasions of the church whereunto their consent is necessary, they did of old, and ought still, to meet in the same place for advice, consultation, and consent, as was proved before. This is so fully expressed and exemplified in the two great churches of Jerusalem and Antioch, Acts xv. that it cannot be gainsayed. When Paul and Barnabas, sent by the brethren or church at Antioch, (ver. 1. 3.) were come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church, as the brethren are called in distinction from the apostles and elders, ver. 4. So when the apostles and elders assembled to consider of the case proposed unto them, the whole multitude of the church, that is the brethren, assembled with them; ver. 6. 12. neither were they mute persons, mere auditors and spectators in the assembly, but they concurred both in the debate and determination of the question; insomuch as they are expressly joined with the apostles and elders in the advice given, ver. 22, 23. And when Paul and Barnabas returned unto Antioch, the multitude unto whom the letter of the church at Jerusalem was directed, came together about it, ver. 23. 30. Unless this be observed, the primitive church-state is overthrown: but I shall return from this digression.

The first officer or elder of the church is the pastor. A pastor is the elder that feeds and rules the flock, 1 Pet. v. 2. that is, who is its teacher and its bishop; ποιμάνατε, ἐπισκοποῦντες, 'feed, taking the oversight.'

It is not my present design nor work to give a full account of the qualifications required in persons to be called

unto this office; nor of their duty and work, with the qualities or virtues to be exercised therein. It would require a large discourse to handle them practically, and it hath been done by others. It were to be wished, that what is of this kind expressed in the rule, and which the nature of the office doth indispensably require, were more exemplified in practice than it is. But some things relating unto this officer and his office that are needful to be well stated, I shall treat concerning.

The name of a pastor or shepherd is metaphorical. It is a denomination suited unto his work, denoting the same office and person with a bishop or elder, spoken of absolutely without limitation unto either teaching or ruling. And it seems to be used or applied unto this office, because it is more comprehensive of, and instructive in, all the duties that belong unto it, than any other name whatever; nay, than all of them put together. The grounds and reasons of this metaphor, or whence the church is called a flock, and whence God termeth himself the Shepherd of the flock; whence the sheep of this flock are committed unto Christ, whereon he becomes the 'good Shepherd that lays down his life for the sheep,' and the Prince of shepherds; what is the interest of men in a participation of this office, and what their duty thereon, are things well worth the consideration of them who are called unto it. Hirelings, yea, wolves and dumb dogs, do in many places take on themselves to be shepherds of the flock, by whom it is devoured and destroyed.[s]

Whereas, therefore, this name or appellation is taken from, and includes in it love, care, tenderness, watchfulness in all the duties of going before, preserving, feeding, defending the flock, the sheep and the lambs, the strong, the weak and diseased, with accountableness as servants unto the chief Shepherd, it was generally disused in the church; and those of bishops or overseers, guides, presidents, elders, which seem to include more of honour and authority, were retained in common use; that though one of them, at last, namely, that of bishops, with some elating compositions and adjuncts of power, obtained the pre-eminence. Out of the

[s] Acts xx. 18, 19. 1 Pet. v. 2. 4. Cant. i. 7. Jer. xiii. 17. xxiii. 2. Ezek. xxxiv. 3. Gen. xlix. 24. Psal. xxiii. 1. lxxx. 1. John x. 11. 14. 16. Heb. xiii. 20. 1 Pet. ii. 25. v. 4.

corruption of these compositions, and additions in archbishops, metropolitans, patriarchs, and the like, brake forth the cockatrice of the church, that is, the pope.

But this name is by the Holy Ghost appropriated unto the principal ministers of Christ in his church; Eph. iv. 11. and under that name they were promised unto the church of old; Jer. iii. 15. And the work of these pastors is to feed the flock committed to their charge, as it is constantly required of them; Acts xx. 29. 1 Pet. v. 2.

Of pastoral feeding there are two parts. (1.) Teaching or instruction. (2.) Rule or discipline. Unto these two heads may all the acts and duties of a shepherd toward his flock be reduced; and both are intended in the term of feeding; 1 Chron. xi. 2. xvii. 6. Jer. xxiii. 2. Mic. v. 4. vii. 14. Zech. xi. 7. Acts xx. 28. John xxi. 14. 1 Pet. v. 2, &c. wherefore he who is the pastor, is the bishop, the elder, the teacher of the church.

These works of teaching and ruling may be distinct in several officers, namely, of teachers and rulers; but to divide them in the same office of pastors, that some pastors should feed by teaching only, but have no right to rule by virtue of their office; and some should attend in exercise unto rule only, not esteeming themselves obliged to labour continually in feeding the flock, is almost to overthrow this office of Christ's designation, and to set up two in the room of it, of men's own projection.

Of the call of men unto this office, so many things have been spoken and written by others at large, that I shall only insist, and that very briefly, on some things which are either of the most important consideration, or have been omitted by others. As,

1. Unto the call of any person unto this office of a pastor in the church, there are certain qualifications previously required in him, disposing and making him fit for that office. The outward call is an act of the church, as we shall shew immediately. But therein is required an obediential acting of him also who is called. Neither of these can be regular, neither can the church act according to rule and order, nor the person called act in such a due obedience, unless there are in him some previous indications of the mind of God, designing the person to be called by such qualifications, as

may render him meet and able for the discharge of his office and work. For ordinary vocation is not a collation of gracious spiritual abilities suiting and making men meet for the pastoral office; but it is the communication of right and power for the regular use and exercise of gifts and abilities received antecedently unto that call, unto the edification of the church, wherein the office itself doth consist. And if we would know what these qualifications and endowments are, for the substance of them, we may learn them in their great example and pattern, our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ being the good Shepherd, whose the sheep are, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls; the chief Shepherd did design, in the undertaking and exercise of his pastoral office, to give a type and example unto all those who are to be called unto the same office under him. And if there be not a conformity unto him herein, no man can assure his own conscience, or the church of God, that he is or can be lawfully called unto this office.

The qualifications of Christ unto, and the gracious qualities of his mind and soul in, the discharge of his pastoral office, may be referred unto four heads.

1. That furniture with spiritual gifts and abilities by the communication of the Holy Ghost unto him, in an unmeasurable fulness, whereby he was fitted for the discharge of his office. This is expressed with respect unto his undertaking of it, Isa. xi. 2, 3. lxi. 1—3. Luke iv. 14. Herein was he 'anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows,' Heb. i. 9. But this unction of the Spirit is in a certain measure required in all who are called, or to be called, unto the pastoral office, Eph. iv. 7. That there are spiritual powers, gifts, and abilities required unto the gospel ministry, I have at large declared in another treatise, as also what they are. And where there are none of these spiritual abilities which are necessary unto the edification of the church in the administration of gospel ordinances, as in prayer, preaching, and the like, no outward call or order can constitute any man an evangelical pastor. As unto particular persons I will not contend, as unto an absolute nullity in the office by reason of their deficiency in spiritual gifts, unless it be gross, and such as renders them utterly useless unto the edification of the church. I only say, that no man can in an or-

derly way and manner be called or set apart unto this office, in whom there are not some indications of God's designation of him thereunto by his furniture with spiritual gifts, of knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and utterance for prayer and preaching, with other ministerial duties, in some competent measure.

2. Compassion and love to the flock were gloriously eminent in this 'great Shepherd of the sheep.' After other evidences hereof, he gave them that signal confirmation in 'laying down his life for them.' This testimony of his love he insists upon himself, John x. And herein also his example ought to lie continually before the eyes of them who are called unto the pastoral office. Their entrance should be accompanied with love to the souls of men; and if the discharge of their office be not animated with love unto their flocks, wolves, or hirelings, or thieves they may be, but shepherds they are not. Neither is the glory of the gospel ministry more lost or defaced in any thing, or by any means, than by the evidence that is given among the most, of an inconformity unto Jesus Christ in their love unto the flock. Alas! it is scarce once thought of amongst the most of them, who in various degrees take upon them the pastoral office; where are the fruits of it? what evidence is given of it in any kind? It is well, if some, instead of laying down their lives for them, do not by innumerable ways destroy their souls.

3. There is and was in this great Shepherd a continual watchfulness over the whole flock to keep it, to preserve it, to feed, to lead and cherish it, to purify and cleanse it, until it be presented unspotted unto God. He doth never slumber nor sleep; he watereth his vineyard every moment, keeps it night and day that none may hurt it; loseth nothing of what is committed to him; see Isa. xl. 11. I speak not distinctly of previous qualifications unto an outward call only, but with a mixture of those qualities and duties which are required in the discharge of this office. And herein also is the Lord Christ to be our example. And hereunto do belong, (1.) Constant prayer for the flock. (2.) Diligence in the dispensation of the word, with wisdom as unto times, seasons, the state of the flock in general, their light, knowledge, ways, walking, ignorance, temptations, trials, defec-

tions, weaknesses of all sorts, growth, and decays, &c. (3.) Personal admonition, exhortation, consolation, instruction, as their particular cases do require. (4.) All with a design to keep them from evil; and to present them without blame before Christ Jesus at the great day. But these and things of the like nature, presenting themselves with some earnestness unto my mind, I shall at present discharge myself of the thoughts of them, hoping a more convenient place and season to give them a larger treat; and somewhat yet farther shall be spoken of them in the next chapter.

4. Zeal for the glory of God in his whole ministry, and in all the ends of it, had its continual residence in the holy soul of the great Shepherd. Hence it is declared in an expression intimating that it was inexpressible: 'The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.' This also must accompany the discharge of the pastoral office, or it will find no acceptance with him. And the want of it is one of those things which hath filled the world with a dead, faithless, fruitless ministry.

5. As he was absolutely in himself 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;' so a conformity unto him in these things, and that in some degree of eminency above others, is required in them who are called unto this office.

Again, none can or may take this office upon him, or discharge the duties of it, which are peculiarly its own, with authority, but he who is called and set apart thereunto according to the mind of Jesus Christ. The continuation of all church-order and power, of the regular administration of all sacred ordinances, yea, of the very being of the church as it is organical, depends on this assertion. Some deny the continuation of the office itself, and of those duties which are peculiar unto it, as the administration of the sacraments. Some judge, that persons neither called nor set apart unto this office, may discharge all the duties and the whole work of it; some, that a temporary delegation of power unto any by the church, is all the warranty necessary for the undertaking and discharge of this office. Many have been the contests about these things, occasioned by the ignorance and disorderly affections of some persons. I shall briefly represent the truth herein with the grounds of it; and pro-

ceed to the consideration of the call itself, which is so necessary.

1. Christ himself in his own person, and by his own authority, was the author of this office. He gave it, appointed it, erected it in the church, by virtue of his sovereign power and authority; Eph. iv. 11, 12. 1 Cor. xii. 28. As he gave, appointed, ordained an extraordinary office of apostleship; so he ordained, appointed, and gave the ordinary office of pastorship or teaching. They have both the same divine original.

2. He appointed this office for continuance, or to abide in the church unto the consummation of all things; Eph. iv. 13. Matt. xxviii. 19. And therefore he took order by his apostles, that for the continuation of this office, pastors, elders, or bishops, should be called and ordained unto the care and discharge of it in all churches; which was done by them accordingly; Acts xiv. 22, 23. xx. 28. 1 Tim. iii. 1, 2. Tit. i. 5. Wherein he gave rule unto all churches unto the end of the world, and prescribed them their duty.

3. On this office, and the discharge of it, he hath laid the whole weight of the order, rule, and edification of his church, in his name and by virtue of his authority; Acts xx. 28. Col. iv. 17. 1 Tim. iii. 15. 1 Pet. v. 1—6. Rev. ii. 1—5. &c. Hereon a double necessity of the continuation of this office doth depend; First, That which ariseth from the precept or command of it, which made it necessary to the church, on the account of the obedience which it owes to Christ; and, Secondly, Of its being the principal ordinary means of all the ends of Christ in and towards his church. Wherefore, although he can himself feed his church in the wilderness, where it is deprived of all outward instituted means of edification; yet where this office fails though its neglect, there is nothing but disorder, confusion, and destruction, that will ensue thereon; no promise of feeding or edification.

4. The Lord Christ hath given commands unto the church, for obedience unto those who enjoy and exercise this office among them. Now all these commands are needless and superfluous, nor can any obedience be yielded unto the Lord Christ in their observance, unless there be a continuation of this office. And the church loseth as much in grace and privi-

lege, as it loseth in commands. For in obedience unto the commands of Christ, doth grace in its exercise consist; 1 Tim. v. 17. Heb. xiii. 7. 17.

5. This office is accompanied with power and authority, which none can take or assume to themselves. All power and authority, whether in things spiritual or temporal, which is not either founded in the law of nature, or collated by divine ordination, is usurpation and tyranny. No man can of himself take either sword. To invade an office which includes power and authority over others, is to disturb all right, natural, divine, and civil. That such an authority is included in this office, is evident, (1.) From the names ascribed unto them in whom it is vested; as pastors, bishops, elders, rulers, all of them requiring of it. (2.) From the work prescribed unto them, which is, feeding by rule and teaching. (3.) From the execution of church-power in discipline, or the exercise of the keys of the kingdom of heaven committed unto them. (4.) From the commands given for obedience unto them which respect authority. (5.) From their appointment to be the means and instruments of exerting the authority of Christ in the church, which can be done no other way.

6. Christ hath appointed a standing rule of the calling of men unto this office, as we shall see immediately. But if men may enter upon it, and discharge it, without any such call, that rule, with the way of the call prescribed, are altogether in vain. And there can be no greater affront unto the authority of Christ in his church, than to act in it, in neglect of or opposition unto the rule that he hath appointed for the exercise of power in it.

7. There is an accountable trust committed unto those who undertake this office. The whole flock, the ministry itself, the truths of the gospel, as to the preservation of them all, are committed to them; Col. iv. 17. 1 Tim. vi. 20. 2 Tim. ii. 2. 16. 23. Acts xx. 28. 1 Pet. v. 1—5. Heb. xiii. 17. 'they who must give an account.' Nothing can be more wicked or foolish, than for a man to intrude himself into a trust, which is not committed unto him. They are branded as profligately wicked, who attempt any such thing among men, which cannot be done without falsification: and what shall he be esteemed who intrudes himself into the highest trust that any creature is capable of in the name of Christ,

and take upon him to give an account of its discharge at the last day, without any divine call or warranty?

8. There are unto the discharge of this office especial promises granted and annexed of present assistances, and future eternal rewards; Matt. xxviii. 19. 1 Pet. v. 4. Either these promises belong unto them who take this office on themselves without any call, or they do not. If they do not, then have they neither any especial assistance in their work, nor can expect any reward of their labours. If it be said they have an interest in them, then the worst of men may obtain the benefit of divine promises, without any divine designation.

9. The general force of the rule, Heb. v. 4. includes a prohibition of undertaking any sacred office without a divine call; and so the instances of such prohibitions under the Old Testament, as unto the duties annexed unto an office, as in the case of Uzziah invading the priesthood, or of taking a ministerial office without call or mission, as Jer. xxvii. 9. 14, 15. having respect unto the order of God's institutions, may be pleaded in this case.

10. Whoever therefore takes upon him the pastoral office without a lawful outward call, doth take unto himself power and authority without any divine warranty, which is a foundation of all disorder and confusion; interests himself in an accountable trust, no way committed unto him; hath no promise of assistance in, or reward for his work, but engageth in that which is destructive of all church-order, and consequently of the very being of the church itself.

11. Yet there are three things that are to be annexed unto this assertion by way of limitation: as, (1.) Many things performed by virtue of office in a way of authority, may be performed by others not called to office, in a way of charity. Such are the moral duties of exhorting, admonishing, comforting, instructing, and praying with and for one another. (2.) Spiritual gifts may be exercised unto the edification of others, without office-power, where order and opportunity do require it. But the constant exercise of spiritual gifts in preaching, with a refusal of undertaking a ministerial office, or without design so to do upon a lawful call, cannot be approved. (3.) The rules proposed concern only ordinary cases, and the ordinary state of the church; extraordinary

cases are accompanied with a warranty in themselves for extraordinary actings and duties.

12. The call of persons unto the pastoral office is an act and duty of the church. It is not an act of the political magistrate, not of the pope, not of any single prelate, but of the whole church, unto whom the Lord Christ hath committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And, indeed, although there be great differences about the nature and manner of the call of men unto this office, yet none who understand aught of these things, can deny but that it is an act and duty of the church; which the church alone is empowered by Christ to put forth and exert. But this will more fully appear in the consideration of the nature and manner of this call of men unto the pastoral office, and the actings of the church therein.

The call of persons unto the pastoral office in the church consists of two parts; First, Election; Secondly, Ordination, as it is commonly called, or sacred separation by fasting and prayer. As unto the former, four things must be inquired into. 1. What is previous unto it, or preparatory for it. 2. Wherein it doth consist. 3. Its necessity, or the demonstration of its truth and institution. 4. What influence it hath into the communication of pastoral-office-power unto a pastor so chosen.

1. That which is previous unto it is the meetness of the person for his office and work, that is to be chosen. It can never be the duty of the church to call or choose an unmeet, an unqualified, an unprepared person unto this office. No pretended necessity, no outward motives, can enable or warrant it so to do, nor can it by any outward act, whatever the rule or solemnity of it be, communicate ministerial authority unto persons utterly unqualified for, and incapable of the discharge of the pastoral office according to the rule of the Scripture. And this hath been one great means of debasing the ministry, and almost ruining the church itself; either by the neglect of those who suppose themselves intrusted with the whole power of ordination, or by impositions on them by secular power, and patrons of livings, as they are called, with the stated regulation of their proceedings herein, by a defective law, whence there hath not been a due regard unto the antecedent preparatory qualifications of those who are called unto the ministry.

Two ways is the meetness of any one made known and to be judged of. (1.) By an evidence given of the qualifications in him before mentioned. The church is not to call or choose any one to office who is not known unto them; of whose frame of spirit and walking they have not had some experience; not a novice, or one lately come unto them. He must be one who by his ways and walking hath obtained a good report, even among them that are without, so far as he is known; unless they be enemies or scoffers; and one that hath in some good measure evidenced his faith, love, and obedience unto Jesus Christ in the church. This is the chief trust that the Lord Christ hath committed unto his churches; and if they are negligent herein, or if at all adventures they will impose an officer in his house upon him without satisfaction of his meetness upon due inquiry, it is a great dishonour unto him and provocation of him. Herein principally are churches made the overseers of their own purity and edification. To deny them an ability of a right judgment herein, or a liberty for the use and exercise of it, is error and tyranny. But that flock which Christ purchased and purified with his own blood, is thought by some to be little better than a herd of brute beasts. Where there is a defect of this personal knowledge for want of opportunity, it may be supplied by testimonies of unquestionable authority. (2.) By a trial of his gifts for edification. These are those spiritual endowments which the Lord Christ grants, and the Holy Spirit works in the minds of men, for this very end that the church may be profited by them; 1 Cor. xii. 7. And we must at present take it for granted, that every true church of Christ, that is so in the matter and form of it, is able to judge in some competent measure what gifts of men are suited unto their own edification. But yet in making a judgment hereof, one directive means is the advice of other elders and churches, which they are obliged to make use of by virtue of the communion of churches, and the avoidance of offence in their walk in that communion.

2. As to the nature of this election, call, or choice of a person known, tried, and judged meetly qualified for the pastoral office, it is an act of the whole church, that is, of the fraternity with their elders, if they have any. For a pastor may be chosen unto a church which hath other teachers,

elders, or officers already instated in it. In this case their concurrence in the choice intended, is necessary by way of common suffrage, not of authority or office-power. For election is not an act of authority, but of liberty and power, wherein the whole church in the fraternity is equal. If there be no officers stated in the church before, as it was with the churches in the primitive times, on the first ordination of elders among them, this election belongs unto the fraternity.

3. That therefore which we have now to prove, is this; that it is the mind and will of Jesus Christ, that meet persons should be called unto the pastoral office (or any other office in the church) by the election and choice of the church itself whereunto they are called, antecedently unto a sacred solemn separation unto their respective offices. For,

1. Under the Old Testament there were three ways whereby men were called unto office in the church. (1.) They were so extraordinarily and immediately by the nomination and designation of God himself. So Aaron was called unto the priesthood, and others afterward, as Samuel, to be prophets. (2.) By a law of carnal generation; so all the priests of the posterity of Aaron succeeded into the office of the priesthood, without any other call. (3.) By the choice of the people, which was the call of all the ordinary elders and rulers of the church, Deut. i. 13. הבו לכם. 'Give to yourselves.' It was required of the people, that they should, in the first place, make a judgment on their qualifications for the office whereunto they were called. Men known unto them for wise, understanding, righteous, walking in the fear of God, they were to look out, and then to present them unto Moses for their separation unto office, which is election. It is true, that Exod. xiii. 15. it is said that Moses chose the elders. But it is frequent in the Scripture, that where any thing is done by many, where one is chief, that is ascribed indifferently either to the many, or to the chief director. So is it said, 'Israel sent messengers,' Numb. xxi. 21. Moses, speaking of the same things, says, 'I sent messengers,' Deut. ii. 26. So 1 Chron. xix. 19. 'They made peace with David and served him;' which is 2 Sam. x. 19. 'They made peace with Israel and served them.' See also 2 Kings xi. 12. with 2 Chron. xxiii. 11. as also 1 Chron.

xvi. 1. with 2 Sam. vi. 17. and the same may be observed in other places. Wherefore the people chose these elders under the conduct and guidance of Moses, which directs us unto the right interpretation of Acts xiv. 23. whereof we shall speak immediately.

The first of these ways was repeated in the foundation of the evangelical church. Christ himself was called unto his office by the Father, through the unction of the Spirit, Isa. lx. Heb. v. And he himself called the apostles and evangelists, in whom that call ceased. The second ordinary way by the privilege of natural generation of the stock of the priests, was utterly abolished. The third way only remained, for the ordinary continuation of the church; namely, by the choice and election of the church itself, with solemn separation and dedication by officers extraordinary or ordinary.

The first instance of the choice of a church officer had a mixture in it of the first and latter way, in the case of Matthias. As he was able to be a church officer, he had the choice and consent of the church; as he was to be an apostle or an extraordinary officer, there was an immediate divine disposition of him into his office; the latter to give him apostolical authority, the former to make him a president of the future actings of the church in the call of their officers.

I say this being the first example and pattern of the calling of any person unto office in the Christian church-state, wherein there was an interposition of the ordinary actings of men, is established as a rule and precedent not to be changed, altered or departed from, in any age of the church whatever. It is so, as unto what was of common right and equity, which belonged unto the whole church, And I cannot but wonder, how men durst ever reject and disannul this divine example and rule. It will not avail them to say, that it is only a matter of fact, and not a precept or institution that is recorded. For, (1.) It is a fact left on record in the holy Scripture for our instruction and direction. (2.) It is an example of the apostles and the whole church proposed unto us, which in all things, not otherwise determined, hath the force of an institution. (3.) If there was no more in it but this, that we have a matter of common right, determined and applied by the wisdom of the apostles, and

the entire church of believers at that time in the world, it were an impiety to depart from it, unless in case of the utmost necessity.

Whereas, what is here recorded was in the call of an apostle, it strengthens the argument which hence we plead. For if in the extraordinary call of an apostle, it was the mind of Christ, that the fraternity or multitude should have the liberty of their suffrage, how much more is it certainly his mind, that in the ordinary call of their own peculiar officers, in whom, under him, the concernment is their own only, that this right should be continued unto them?

The order of the proceeding of the church herein is distinctly declared. For, (1.) The number of the church at that time, that is of the men, was about an hundred and twenty, ver. 15. (2.) They were assembled all together in one place, so as that Peter stood up in the midst of them, ver. 15. (3.) Peter in the name of the rest of the apostles, declares unto them the necessity of choosing one to be substituted in the room of Judas, ver. 16—20. (4.) He limits the choice of him unto the especial qualification of being a meet witness of the resurrection of Christ, unto those who constantly accompanied him with themselves from the baptism of John, that is, his being baptized by him, whereon he began his public ministry. (5.) Among these they were left at their liberty to nominate any two, who were to be left unto the lot for a determination whether of them God designed unto the office. (6.) Hereon the whole mutitude ἔστησαν δύο, 'appointed two;' that is the ἄνδρες ἀδελφοὶ, 'the men and brethren,' unto whom Peter spoke, ver. 16. did so. (7.) The same persons to promote the work, 'prayed and gave forth their lots,' ver. 24. 26. (8.) Συγκατεψηφίσθη Ματθίας, Matthias was, by the common suffrage of the whole church, reckoned unto the number of the apostles.

I say not that these things were done by the disciples in distinction from Peter and the rest of the apostles, but in conjunction with them. Peter did nothing without them; nor did they any thing without him.

The exception of Bellarmine and others, against this testimony, is, that it was a grant and a condescension in Peter, and not a declaration of the right of the church; that it was an extraordinary case; that the determination of the whole

was by lot; are of no validity. The pretended concession of Peter is a figment; the case was so extraordinary, as to include in it all ordinary cases, for the substance of them. And although the ultimate determination of the individual person, which was necessary unto his apostleship, was immediately divine by lot; yet here is all granted unto the people, in their choosing and appointing two, in their praying, in their casting lots, in their voluntary approbatory suffrage, that is desired.

This blessed example given us by the wisdom of the apostles, yea, of the Spirit of God in them, being eminently suited unto the nature of the thing itself, as we shall see immediately, compliant with all other directions and apostolical examples in the like case, is rather to be followed, than the practice of some degenerate churches, who to cover the turpitude of acting in deserting this example and rule, do make use of a mock-shew and pretence of that which really they deny, reject, and oppose.

The second example we have of the practice of the apostles in this case, whereby the preceding rule is confirmed, is given us, Acts vi. in the election of the deacons. Had there ensued after the choice of Matthias an instance of a diverse practice, by an exclusion of the consent of the people, the former might have been evaded, as that which was absolutely extraordinary, and not obliging unto the church. But this was the very next instance of the call of any church officer; and it was the first appointment of any ordinary officers in the Christian church. For it falling out in the very year of Christ's ascension, there is no mention of any ordinary elders distinct from the apostles, ordained in that church. For all the apostles themselves yet abiding there for the most part of this time, making only some occasional excursions unto other places, were able to take care of the rule of the church, and the preaching of the word. They are indeed mentioned as those who were well known in the church not long afterward, chap. xi. 30. But the first instance of the call of ordinary teaching elders or pastors is not recorded. That of deacons is so by reason of the occasion of it. And we may observe concerning it unto our purpose,

1. That the institution of the office itself was of aposto-

lical authority, and that fulness of church-power wherewith they were furnished by Jesus Christ.

2. That they did not exert that authority but upon such reasons of it, as were satisfactory to the church; which they declare, ver. 2.

3. That the action is ascribed to the twelve in general, without naming any person who spake for the rest; which renders the pretence of the Romanists from the former place, where Peter is said to have spoken unto the disciples, whereon they would have the actings of the church which ensued thereon, to have been by his concession and grant, not of their own right, altogether vain. For the rest of the apostles were as much interested and concerned in what was then spoken by Peter, as they were at this time, when the whole is ascribed unto the twelve.

4. That the church was greatly multiplied that time, on the account of the conversion unto the faith recorded in the foregoing chapter. It is probable, indeed, that many, yea, the most of them, were returned unto their own habitations; for the next year there were churches in all Judea, Galilee and Samaria, chap. ix. 31. And Peter went about throughout all quarters to visit the saints that dwelt in them, ver. 32. of whose conversion we read nothing but that which fell out at Jerusalem at Pentecost; but a great multitude they were, ver. 1, 2.

5. This whole multitude of the church, that is the brethren, ver. 3. assembled in one place, being congregated by the apostles, ver. 2. who would not ordain any thing wherein they were concerned, without their own consent.

6. They judged on the whole matter proposed unto them, and gave their approbation thereof, before they entered upon the practice of it, ver. 5. 'The saying pleased the whole multitude.'

7. The qualifications of the persons to be chosen unto the office intended, are declared by the apostles, ver. 3. 'of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.'

8. These qualities the multitude were to judge upon, and so absolutely of the meetness of any for this office.

9. The choice is wholly committed and left unto them by the apostles, as that which of right did belong unto them;

'look you out among you;' which they made use of, choosing them unto the office by their common suffrage, ver. 5.

10. Having thus chosen them, they presented them as their chosen officers unto the apostles, to be by them set apart unto the exercise of their office by prayer and imposition of hands, ver. 6.

It is impossible, there should be a more evident convincing instance and example of the free choice of ecclesiastical officers by the multitude or fraternity of the church, than is given us herein. Nor was there any ground or reason why this order and process should be observed, why the apostles would not themselves nominate and appoint persons whom they saw and knew meet for this office, to receive it, but that it was the right and liberty of the people, according to the mind of Christ, to choose their own officers, which they would not abridge, nor infringe.

So was it then, οὕτω καὶ νῦν γίνεσθαι ἔδει, saith Chrysostom on the place, and 'so it ought now to be;' but the usage began then to decline. It were well if some would consider how the apostles at that time treated that multitude of the people, which is so much now despised, and utterly excluded from all concern in church affairs, but what consists in servile subjection. But they have in this pattern and precedent for the future ordering of the calling of meet persons to office in the church, their interest, power, and privilege secured unto them, so as that they can never justly be deprived of it. And if there were nothing herein, but only a record of the wisdom of the apostles in managing church affairs, it is marvellous to me, that any who would be thought to succeed them in any part of their trust and office, should dare to depart from the example set before them by the Holy Ghost in them, preferring their own ways and inventions above it. I shall ever judge, that there is more safety in a strict adherence unto this apostolical practice and example, than in a compliance with all the canons of councils or churches afterward.

The only objection usually insisted on, that is by Bellarmine and those that follow him, is, That this being the election of deacons to manage the alms of the church, that is, somewhat of their temporals, nothing can thence be con-

cluded unto the right or way of calling bishops, pastors, or elders, who are to take care of the souls of the people. They may indeed be able to judge of the fitness of them who are to be intrusted with their purses, or what they are willing to give out of them; but it doth not thence follow, that they are able to judge of the fitness of those who are to be their spiritual pastors, nor to have the choice of them.

Nothing can be weaker than this pretence or evasion. For, (1.) The question is concerning the calling of persons unto office in the church in general, whereof we have here a rule, whereunto no exception is any way entered. (2.) This cannot be fairly pleaded by them who appoint deacons to preach, baptize, and officiate publicly in all holy things, excepting only the administration of the eucharist. (3.) If the people are meet and able to judge of them who are of honest report, and full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, which is here required of them, they are able to judge who are meet to be their pastors. (4.) The argument holds strongly on the other side; namely, that if it be right and equal, if it be of divine appointment and apostolical practice, that the people should choose those who were to collect and distribute their charitable benevolence because of their concernment therein, much more are they to enjoy the same liberty, right, and privilege in the choice of their pastors, unto whom they commit the care of their souls, and submit themselves unto their authority in the Lord.

3. Accordingly they did use the same liberty in the choice of their elders; Acts xiv. 23. Χειροτονήσαντες αὐτοῖς πρεσβυτέρους κατ' ἐκκλησίαν, προσευξάμενοι μετὰ νηστειῶν; that is, say Erasmus, Vatablus, Beza, all our old English translations, appointing, ordaining, creating elders by election or the suffrage of the disciples, having prayed with fastings. The whole order of the sacred separation of persons qualified unto the office of the ministry, that is, to be bishops, elders, or pastors, is here clearly represented. For, (1.) They were chosen by the people; the apostles who were present, namely, Paul and Barnabas, presiding in the action, directing of it and confirming that by their consent with them. (2.) A time of prayer and fasting was appointed for the action, or discharge of the duty of the church herein. (3.) When they were so chosen, the apostles present solemnly prayed, whereby

their ordination was complete. And those who would have the χειροτονία here mentioned to be, χειροθεσία, or an authoritative imposition of hands, wherein this ordination did consist, do say there is an ὑστερολογία in the words; that is, they feign a disorder in them, to serve their own hypothesis. For they suppose that their complete ordination was effected, before there was any prayer with fasting; for by imposition of hands in their judgment, ordination is completed; so Bellarmine, A Lapide, on the place, with those that follow them. But first to pervert the true signification of the word, and then to give countenance unto that wresting of it by assigning a disorder unto the words of the whole sentence, and that such a disorder as makes in their judgment a false representation of the matter of fact related, is a way of the interpretation of Scripture which will serve any turn. (4.) This was done in every church, or in every congregation, as Tindal renders the word; namely, in all the particular congregations that were gathered in those parts; for that collection and constitution did always precede the election and ordination of their officers, as is plain in this place; as also Tit. i. 5. So far is it from truth, that the being of churches dependeth on the successive ordination of their officers, that the church, essentially considered, is always antecedent unto their being and call.

But because it is some men's interest to entangle things plain and clear enough in themselves, I shall consider the objections unto this rendition of the words. The whole of it lies against the signification, use, and application of χειροτονήσαντες. Now although we do not here argue merely from the signification of the word, but from the representation of the matter of fact made in the context; yet I shall observe some things sufficient for the removal of that objection. As,

1. The native signification of χειροτονέω, by virtue of its composition, is, to 'lift up,' or 'stretch forth the hands,' or a hand. And hereunto the LXX have respect, Isa. lviii. 9. where they render שלח אצבע, 'the putting forth of the finger,' which is used in an ill sense by χειροτονία. Χειροτονεῖν is the same with τὰς χεῖρας αἴρειν, nor is it ever used in any other signification.

2. The first constant use of it in things political or civil

and so consequently ecclesiastical, is to choose, elect, design, or create any person an officer, magistrate, or ruler, by suffrage or common consent of those concerned. And this was usually done with making bare the hand and arm, with lifting up, as Aristophanes witnesseth. *Ὅμως δὲ χειροτονητέον, ἐξωμισήσαις τὸν ἕτερον βραχιόνα.* He is a great stranger unto these things, who knoweth not that among the Greeks, especially the Athenians, from whom the use of this word is borrowed or taken, *χειροτονία* was an act *ὅλης τῆς ἐκκλησίας*, 'of the whole assembly' of the people in the choice of their officers and magistrates. *Χειροτονέω* is, by common suffrage to decree and determine of any thing, law, or order; and when applied unto persons, it signifies their choice and designation to office. So is it used in the first sense by Demosthenes, Orat. in Timoch. *ὁ δῆμος τὰς ἐμὰς γνώμας περὶ συντερίας τῆς πόλεως ἐχειρότονει*; 'The people confirmed my sayings by their suffrage.' And in the other, Philip. 1. *Οὔτε βουλῆς, οὔτε δήμου χειροτονήσαντες αὐτὸν*; 'Neither the senate, nor the people choosing him to his office.' So is the passive verb used to be created by suffrages. *Χειροτονία* was the act of choosing, whose effect was *ψήφισμα*, the determining vote or suffrage. 'Porrexerunt manus, psephisma notum est,' saith Cicero, speaking of the manner of the Greeks. And when there was a division in choice, it was determined by the greater suffrage; Thucid. lib. 3. *Ἐγένοντο δὲ ἐν τῇ χειροτονίᾳ ἀγχώμαλοι, ἐκράτησε δὲ ἡ τοῦ διδότου.* As many instances of this nature may be produced, as there are reports of calling men unto magistracy by election in the Greek historians. And all the farther compositions of the word do signify to choose, confirm, or to abrogate by common suffrages.

3. The word is but once more used in the New Testament; 2 Cor. viii. 19. where it plainly signifies election and choice of a person to an employment, *χειροτονηθεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν συνέκδημος ἡμῶν*· 'He was chosen of the churches to travel with us.'

4. It is acknowledged, that after this was the common use of the word, it was applied to signify the thing itself, and not the manner of doing it. Hence it is used sometimes for the obtaining or collation of authority, or dignity, or magistracy, any manner of way, though not by election: 'to

appoint,' 'to create.' But this was by an abusive application of the word, to express the thing itself intended, without regard unto its signification and proper use. Why such a use of it should be here admitted, no reason can be given. For in all other places on such occasions, the apostles did admit and direct the churches to use their liberty in their choice. So the 'apostles and elders, with the whole church, sent chosen men of their own company to Antioch,' such as they chose by common suffrage for that end; so again, ver. 25. 'I will send whom you shall approve;' 1 Cor. xvi. 3. The church chose them, the apostle sent him 'who was chosen by the church to be our companion;' 2 Cor. viii. 19. 'Look out from among yourselves;' Acts vi. If on all these and the like occasions, the apostles did guide and direct the people in their right and use of their liberty, as unto the election of persons unto offices and employments, when the churches themselves are concerned, what reason is there to depart from the proper and usual signification of the word in this place, denoting nothing but what was the common practice of the apostles on the like occasions?

5. That which alone is objected hereunto by Bellarmine, and others who follow him, and borrow their whole in this case from him, namely, that χειροτονήσαντες, grammatically agreeing with and regulated by Paul and Barnabas, denotes their act, and not any act of the people, is of no force. For, (1.) Paul and Barnabas did preside in the whole action, helping, ordering, and disposing of the people in the discharge of their duty, as is meet to be done by some on all the like occasions. And therefore it is truly said of them, that they appointed elders by the suffrage of the people. (2.) I have shewed instances before out of the Scripture, that when a thing is done by the people, it is usual to ascribe it unto him or them who were chief therein, as elsewhere the same thing is ascribed unto the whole people.

The same authors contend that the liberty of choosing their own officers or elders, such as it was, was granted unto them or permitted by way of condescension for a season; and not made use of by virtue of any right in them thereunto. But this permission is a mere imagination. It was according to the mind of Christ, that the churches should choose their own elders, or it was not. If it were not, the apostles

would not have permitted it; and if it were, they ought to ordain it, and practise according to it, as they did. Nor is such a constant apostolical practice proposed for the direction of the church in all ages, to be ascribed unto such an original as condescension and permission. Yea, it is evident, that it arose from the most fundamental principles of the constitution and nature of the gospel churches, and was only a regular pursuit and practice of them. For,

1. The calling of bishops, pastors, elders, is an act of the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. But these keys are originally and properly given unto the whole church, unto the elders of it only ministerially; and as unto exercise pastors are eyes to the church: but God and nature design in the first place, light to the whole body, to the whole person, thereunto it is granted both subjectively and finally, but actually it is peculiarly seated in the eye. So is it in the grant of church-power, it is given to the whole church, though to be exercised only by its elders.

That the grant of the keys unto Peter was in the person and as the representative of the whole confessing church, is the known judgment of Austin and a multitude of divines that follow him: so he fully expresseth himself, Tractat. 124. in Johan. 'Peter the apostle bare in a general figure the person of the church. For as unto what belonged unto himself, he was by nature one man, by grace one Christian, and of special mere abounding grace, one and the chief apostle. But when it was said unto him, I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, &c. he signified the whole church, &c. Again, the church which is founded in Christ, received from him in (the person of) Peter, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which is the power of binding and loosing.'

Unto whom these keys are granted, they according to their distinct interests in that grant, have the right and power of calling their bishops, pastors, or elders; for in the exercise of that trust and power, it doth consist. But this is made unto the whole church. And as there are in a church already constituted several sorts of persons, as some are elders, others are of the people only, this right resideth in them, and is acted by them according to their respective capacities, as limited by the light of nature and divine insti-

tution, which is, that the election of them should belong unto the body of the people, and their authoritative designation or ordination unto the elders. And when in any place the supreme magistrate is a member or part of the church, he hath also his peculiar right herein.

That the power of the keys is thus granted originally and fundamentally unto the whole church, is undeniably confirmed by two arguments.

1. The church itself is the wife, the spouse, the bride, the queen of the husband and king of the church Christ Jesus; Psal. xlv. 10. John iii. 29. Rev. xxi. 9. xxii. 17. Matt. xxv. 1. 5, 6. Other wife Christ hath none, nor hath the church any other husband. Now to whom should the keys of the house be committed but unto the bride? There is, I confess, another who claims the keys to be his own, but withal, he makes himself the head and husband of the church, proclaiming himself, not only to be an adulterer with that harlot which he calleth the church, but a tyrant also, in that pretending to be her husband he will not trust her with the keys of his house, which Christ hath done with his spouse. And whereas by the canon law every bishop is the husband or spouse of his diocesan church, for the most part they commit an open rape upon the people, taking them without their consent; at least are not chosen by them, which yet is essential unto a lawful marriage. And the bride of Christ comes no otherwise so to be, but by the voluntary choice of him to be her husband.

For the officers or rulers of the church, they do belong unto it as hers; 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. And stewards in the house; 1 Cor. iv. 1. 'the servants of the church for Jesus' sake;' 2 Cor. iv. 5.

If the Lord Christ have the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that is, of 'his own house;' Heb. iii. if the church itself be the spouse of Christ, the mother of the family; Psal. lxviii. 13. the bride, the lamb's wife; and if all the officers of the church be but stewards and servants in the house and unto the family; if the Lord Christ do make a grant of these keys unto any, whereon the disposal of all things in this house and family doth depend, the question is, whether he hath originally granted them unto his holy spouse to dispose of according unto her judgment and duty,

or unto any servants in the house, to dispose of her and all her concernments, at their pleasure?

2. The power of the keys as unto binding and loosing, and consequently as unto all other acts thence proceeding, is expressly granted unto the whole church; Matt. xviii. 17, 18. 'If he shall neglect to hear them, tell the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican; verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.' What church it is that is here intended, we have proved before; and that the church is intrusted with the power of binding and loosing. And what is the part of the body of the people herein, the apostle declares, 1 Cor. v. 4. 2 Cor. ii. 6.

Secondly, This right exemplified in apostolical practice, is comprehended in the commands given unto the church, or body of the people, with respect unto teachers and rulers of all sorts; for unto them it is in a multitude of places given in charge that they should discern and try false prophets, fly from them; try spirits, or such as pretend spiritual gifts or offices; reject them who preach false doctrine, to give testimony unto them that are to be in office; with sundry other things of the like nature, which all of them do suppose, or cannot be discharged without a right in them to choose the worthy, and reject the unworthy, as Cyprian speaks. See Matt. vii. 17. John v. 39. Gal. xi. 9. 1 Thess. v. 19—21. 1 John iv. 1. 2 John x. 11.

What is objected hereunto from the unfitness and disability of the people to make a right judgment concerning them who are to be their pastors and rulers, labours with a threefold weakness. For, (1.) It reflects dishonour upon the wisdom of Christ in commanding them the observance and discharge of such duties, as they are no way meet for. (2.) It proceeds upon a supposition of that degenerate state of churches in their members, as to light, knowledge, wisdom, and holiness, which they are for the most part fallen into; which must not be allowed to have the force of argument in it; when it is to be lamented, and ought to be reformed. (3.) It supposeth that there is no supply of assistance provided for the people, in the discharge of their duty

to guide and direct them therein; which is otherwise; seeing the elders of the church wherein any such election is made, and those of other churches in communion with that church, are by the common advice and declaration of their judgment, to be assistant unto them.

Thirdly, The church is a voluntary society. Persons otherwise absolutely free, as unto all the rules, laws, and ends of such a society, do of their own wills and free choice coalesce into it. This is the original of all churches, as hath been declared. 'They gave their ownselves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God;' 2 Cor. viii. 5. Herein neither by prescription, nor tradition, nor succession, hath any one more power or authority than another; but they are all equal. It is gathered into this society merely by the authority of Christ; and where it is so collected, it hath neither right, power, privilege, rules, nor bonds as such, but what are given, prescribed, and limited by the institution and laws of Christ. Moreover, it abides and continues on the same grounds and principles, as whereon it was collected, namely, the wills of the members of it subjected unto the commands of Christ. This is as necessary unto its present continuance in all its members, as it was in its first plantation. It is not like the political societies of the world, which being first established by force or consent, bring a necessity on all that are born in them and under them, to comply with their rule and laws. For men may, and in many cases ought to submit unto the disposal of temporal things, in a way, it may be, not convenient for them, which they judge not well of, and which in many things is not unto their advantage. And this may be just and equal, because the special good which every one would aim at, being not absolutely so, may be outbalanced by a general good, nor alterable, but by the prejudice of that which is good in particular. But with reference unto things spiritual and eternal it is not so. No man can by any previous law be concluded as unto his interest in such things; nor is there any general good to be attained by the loss of any of them. None therefore can coalesce in such a society, or adhere unto it, or be any way belonging unto it, but by his own free choice and consent. And it is inquired, how it is possible that any rule, authority,

power, or office, should arise or be erected in such a society? We speak of that which is ordinary; for he by whom this church-state is erected and appointed, may and did appoint in it, and over it, extraordinary officers for a season. And we do suppose, that as he hath by his divine authority instituted and appointed that such societies shall be, that he hath made grant of privileges and powers to them proper and sufficient for this end; as also that he hath given laws and rules, by the observance whereof, they may be made partakers of those privileges and powers, with a right unto their exercise.

On these suppositions in a society absolutely voluntary, among those who in their conjunction into it, by their own consent, are every way equal, there can but three things be required unto the actual constitution of rule and office among them. And the first is, That there be some among them that are fitted and qualified for the discharge of such an office in a peculiar manner above others. This is previous unto all government, beyond that which is purely natural and necessary. 'Principio rerum, gentium nationumque imperium penes reges erat; quos ad fastigium hujus majestatis, non popularis ambitio, sed spectata inter bonos moderatio provehebat.' Just. So it was in the world, so it was in the church. 'Præsident probati quique seniores, honorem istum non pretio sed testimonio adepti.' Tertul. This preparation and furniture of some persons with abilities and meet qualifications for office and work in the church, the Lord Christ hath taken on himself, and doth and will effect it in all generations. Without this there can be neither office, nor rule, nor order in the church.

2. Whereas, there is a new relation to be made or created between a pastor, bishop, or elder, and the church, which was not before between them (a bishop and a church, a pastor and a flock are *relata's*), it must be introduced at the same time by the mutual voluntary acts of one another, or of each party. For one of the *relata* can, as such, have no being or existence without the other. Now this can no otherwise be, but by the consent and voluntary subjection of the church unto persons so antecedently qualified for office, according to the law and will of Christ. For it cannot be done by the delegation of power and authority from

any other superior or equal unto them that do receive it. Neither the nature of this power, which is incapable of such a delegation, nor the relation unto Christ of all those who are pastors of the church, will admit of an interposition of authority by way of delegation of power from themselves in other men, which would make them their ministers, and not Christ's; nor is it consistent with the nature of such a voluntary society. This therefore can no way be done, but by free choice, election, consent, or approbation. It cannot, I say, be so regularly. How far an irregularity herein may vitiate the whole call of a minister, we do not now inquire.

Now this choice or election doth not communicate a power from them that choose unto them that are chosen, as though such a power as that whereunto they are called, should be formally inherent in the choosers, antecedent unto such choice. For this would make those that are chosen to be their minister only; and to act all things in their name, and by virtue of authority derived from them. It is only an instrumental, ministerial means to instate them in that power and authority which is given unto such officers by the constitution and laws of Christ, whose ministers thereon they are. These gifts, offices, and officers, being granted by Christ unto the churches, Eph. iv. 12. wherever there is a church called according to his mind, they do in and by their choice of them, 'submit themselves unto them in the Lord,' according unto all the powers and duties wherewith they are by him intrusted, and whereunto they are called.

3. It is required that persons so chosen, so submitted unto, be so solemnly separated, dedicated unto, and confirmed in their office by fasting and prayer. As this is consonant unto the light of nature, which directs unto a solemnity in the susception of public officers; whence proceeds the coronation of kings, which gives them not their title, but solemnly proclaims it, which on many accounts is unto the advantage of government; so it is prescribed unto the church in this case by especial institution. But hereof I shall speak farther immediately.

This order of calling men unto the pastoral office, namely, by their previous qualifications for the ministry, whereby a general designation of the persons to be called is

made by Christ himself; the orderly choice or election of him in a voluntary subjection unto him in the Lord, according to the mind of Christ, by the church itself; followed with solemn ordination, or setting apart unto the office and discharge of it by prayer with fasting, all in obedience unto the commands and institution of Christ, whereunto the communication of office-power and privilege is by law-constitution annexed, is suited unto the light of reason, in all such cases, the nature of gospel societies in order or churches; the ends of the ministry, the power committed by Christ unto the church, and confirmed by apostolical practice and example.

Herein we rest, without any farther dispute or limiting the formal cause of the communication of office-power unto any one act or duty of the church, or of the bishops or elders of it. All the three things mentioned are essential thereunto; and when any of them are utterly neglected, where they are neither formally nor virtually, there is no lawful regular call unto the ministry according to the mind of Christ.

This order was a long time observed in the ancient church inviolate; and the footsteps of it may be traced through all ages of the church; although it first gradually decayed, then was perverted and corrupted, until it issued (as in the Roman church) in a pageant and show, instead of the reality of the things themselves. For the trial and approbation of spiritual endowments previously necessary unto the call of any, was left unto the pedantic examination of the bishop's domestics, who knew nothing of them in themselves; the election and approbation of the people was turned into a mock show in the sight of God and men, a deacon calling out, that if any had objections against him who was to be ordained, they should come forth and speak; whereunto another cries out of a corner by compact, he is learned and worthy; and ordination was esteemed to consist only in the outward sign of imposition of hands, with some other ceremonies annexed thereunto, whereby, without any other consideration, there ensued a flux of power from the ordainers unto the ordained.

But from the beginning it was not so. And some few instances of the right of the people, and the exercise of it

in the choice of their own pastors, may be touched on in our passage. Clem. Epist. ad Corinth. affirms, that the apostles themselves appointed approved persons unto the office of the ministry, συνεδοκησάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας πάσης, 'by or with the consent or choice of the whole church.' Συνεδοκεῖν, is 'to enact by common consent;' which makes it somewhat strange, that a learned man should think that the right of the people in elections is excluded in this very place by Clemens, from what is assigned unto the apostles in ordination.

Ignat. Epist. ad Philadelph. Πρέπον ἐστιν ὑμῖν, ὡς ἐκκλησία Θεοῦ, χειροτονήσαι ἐπίσκοπον, writing to the fraternity of the church, 'it becomes you, as a church of God, to choose or ordain a bishop.'

Tertull. Apol. 'Præsident probati quique seniores, honorem istum non pretio, sed testimonio adepti.' 'The elders came unto their honour or office by the testimony of the people;' that is, by their suffrage in their election.

Origen, in the close of his last book against Celsus, discoursing expressly of the calling and constitution of churches or cities of God, speaking of the elders and rulers of them, affirms, that they are ἐκλεγόμενοι, 'chosen to their office' by the churches which they do rule.

The testimony given by Cyprian in sundry places unto this right of the people, especially in Epist. 68. unto the elders and people of some churches in Spain, is so known, so frequently urged and excepted against to so little purpose, as that it is no way needful to insist again upon it. Some few things I shall only observe concerning and out of that epistle. As,

1. It was not a single epistle of his own more ordinary occasions, but a determination upon a weighty question made by a synod of bishops or elders, in whose name, as well as that of Cyprian, it was written and sent unto the churches who had craved their advice.

2. He doth not only assert the right of the people to choose worthy persons to be their bishops, and reject those that are unworthy; but also industriously proves it so to be their right by divine institution and appointment.

3. He declares it to be the sin of the people, if they neglect the use and exercise of their right and power in re-

jecting and withdrawing themselves from the communion of unworthy pastors, and choosing others in their room.

4. He affirms that this was the practice, not only of the churches of Africa, but of those in most of the other provinces of the empire. Some passages in his discourse, wherein all these things are asserted, I shall transcribe in the order wherein they lie in the epistle.

'Nec sibi plebs blandiatur, quasi immunis esse a contagio delicti possit cum sacerdote peccatore communicans, et ad injustum et illicitum præpositi sui episcopatum consensum suum commodans. Propter quod plebs obsequens præceptis Dominicis et Deum metuens, a peccatore præposito separare se debet; nec se ad sacrilegi sacerdotis sacrificia miscere; quando ipsa maxime habeat potestatem vel eligendi dignos sacerdotes, vel indignos recusandi; quod et ipsum videmus de divina authoritate descendere.'

'For this cause the people obedient to the commands of our Lord, and fearing God, ought to separate themselves from a wicked bishop, nor mix themselves with the worship of a sacrilegious priest. For they principally have the power of choosing the worthy priests, and rejecting the unworthy, which comes from divine authority or appointment;' as he proves from the Old and New Testament. Nothing can be spoken more fully representing the truth which we plead for. He assigns unto the people a right and power of separating from unworthy pastors, of rejecting or deposing them, and that granted to them by divine authority.

And this power of election in the people, he proves from the apostolical practice before insisted on. 'Quod postea secundum divina magisteria observatur in Actis Apostolorum, quando in ordinando in locum Judæ episcopo, Petrus ad plebem loquitur. Surrexit, inquit, Petrus in medio discentium, fuit autem turba in uno. Nec hoc in episcoporum tantum et sacerdotum, sed in diaconorum ordinationibus observasse apostolos, de quo et ipso in Actis eorum scriptum est. Et convocarunt, inquit, duodecim, totam plebem discipulorum, et dixerunt eis,' &c.

'According unto the divine commands the same course was observed in the Acts of the Apostles,' whereof he gives instances in the election of Matthias, Acts i. and of the deacons, chap. vi.

And afterward speaking of ordination, 'de universæ fraternitatis suffragio,' 'by the suffrage of the whole brotherhood of the church;' he says, 'Diligenter de traditione divina, et apostolica observatione servandum est et tenendum apud nos quoque, ut fere per universas provincias tenetur:' 'According to which divine tradition and apostolical practice, this custom is to be preserved and kept amongst us also, as it is almost through all the provinces.'

Those who are not moved with his authority, yet, I think have reason to believe him in a matter of fact, of what was done every where, or almost every where, in his own days; and they may take time to answer his reasons when they can, which comprise the substance of all that we plead in this case.

But the testimonies in following ages given unto this right and power of the people in choosing their own church-officers, bishops, and others, recorded in the decrees of councils, the writings of the learned men in them, the rescripts of popes, and constitutions of emperors, are so fully and faithfully collected by Blondellus in the third part of his apology for the judgment of Jerom about episcopacy, as that nothing can be added unto his diligence, nor is there any need of farther confirmation of the truth in this behalf.

The pretence also of Bellarmine, and others who follow him, and borrow their conceits from him, that this liberty of the people in choosing their own bishops and pastors, was granted unto them at first by way of indulgence or connivance; and that being abused by them, and turned into disorder, was gradually taken from them, until it issued in that shameful mocking of God and man, which is in use in the Roman church, when at the ordination of a bishop or priest one deacon makes a demand, Whether the person to be ordained be approved by the people, and another answers out of a corner, That the people approve him, have been so confuted by Protestant writers of all sorts, that it is needless to insist any longer on them.

Indeed, the concessions that are made, that this ancient practice of the church, in the people's choosing their own officers (which to deny, is all one as to deny that the sun gives light at noon-day) is, as unto its right, by various

degrees transferred unto popes, patrons, and bishops, with a representation in a mere pageantry, of the people's liberty to make objections against them that are to be ordained, are as fair a concession of the gradual apostacy of churches from their original order and constitution, as need be desired.

This power and right which we assign unto the people, is not to act itself only in a subsequent consent unto one that is ordained, in the acceptance of him to be their bishop or pastor. How far that may salve the defect and disorder of the omission of previous elections, and so preserve the essence of the ministerial call, I do not now inquire. But that which we plead for, is, the power and right of election to be exercised previously unto the solemn ordination or setting apart of any unto the pastoral office, communicative of office-power in its own kind unto the person chosen.

This is part of that contest which for sundry ages filled most countries of Europe with broils and disorders. Neither is there yet an end put unto it. But in this present discourse we are not in the least concerned in these things. For our inquiry is, what state and order of church affairs is declared and represented unto us in the Scripture. And therein there is not the least intimation of any of those things from whence this controversy did arise, and whereon it doth depend. Secular endowments, jurisdictions, investiture, rights of presentation, and the like, with respect unto the evangelical pastoral office, or its exercise in any place, which are the subject of these contests, are foreign unto all things that are directed in the Scriptures concerning them, nor can be reduced unto any thing that belongs unto them. Wherefore, whether this 'jus patronatus' be consistent with gospel-institutions; whether it may be continued with respect unto lands, tythes, and benefices; or how it may be reconciled unto the right of the people in the choice of their own ecclesiastical officers, from the different acts, objects, and ends required unto the one and the other, are things not of our present consideration.

And this we affirm to be agreeable unto natural reason and equity, to the nature of churches in their institution and ends, to all authority and office-power in the church, necessary unto its edification, with the security of the con-

sciences of the officers themselves, the preservation of due respect and obedience unto them, constituted by the institution of Christ himself in his apostles, and the practice of the primitive church. Wherefore, the utter despoiling of the church, of the disciples, of those gathered in church-societies by his authority and command, of this right and liberty, may be esteemed a sacrilege of a higher nature, than sundry other things which are reproached as criminal under that name.

And if any shall yet farther appear to justify this deprivation of the right laid claim unto, and the exclusion of the people from their ancient possession with sobriety of argument and reason, the whole cause may be yet farther debated from principles of natural light and equity, from maxims of law and polity, from the necessity of the ends of church-order and power, from the moral impossibility of any other way of the conveyance of ecclesiastical office-power, as well as from evangelical institution and the practice of the first churches.

It will be objected, I know, that the restoration of this liberty unto the people, will overthrow that 'jus patronatus,' or right of presenting unto livings and preferments, which is established by law in this nation, and so under a pretence of restoring unto the people their right in common, destroy other men's undoubted rights in their own enclosures.

But this election of the church doth not actually and immediately instate the persons chosen in the office whereunto he is chosen; nor give actual right unto its exercise. It is required moreover, that he be solemnly set apart unto his office in and by the church with fasting and prayer. That there should be some kind of peculiar prayer in the dedication of any unto the office of the ministry, is a notion that could never be obliterated in the minds of men concerned in these things, nor cast out of their practice. Of what sort they have been amongst many we do not now inquire. But there hath been less regard unto the other duty, namely, that these prayers should be accompanied with fasting. But this also is necessary by virtue of apostolical example; Acts xiv. 23.

The conduct of this work belongs unto the elders or officers of the church, wherein any one is to be so ordained.

It did belong unto extraordinary officers whilst they were continued in the church; and upon the cessation of their office, it is devolved on the ordinary stated officers of the church. It is so, I say, in case there be any such officer before fixed in the church, whereunto any one is to be only ordained; and in case there be none, the assistance of pastors or elders of other churches may and ought to be desired, unto the conduct and regulation of the duty.

It is needless to inquire what is the authoritative influence of this ordination, into the communication of office or office-power; whilst it is acknowledged to be indispensably necessary and to belong essentially unto the call unto office. For when sundry duties, as these of election and ordination, are required unto the same end, by virtue of divine institution, it is not for me to determine what is the peculiar efficacy of the one or the other, seeing neither of them without the other, hath any at all.

Hereunto is added, as an external adjunct, imposition of hands significant of the persons so called to office, in and unto the church. For although it will be difficultly proved, that the use of this ceremony was designed unto continuance, after a cessation of the communication of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, whereof it was the sign and outward means, in extraordinary officers; yet we do freely grant it unto the ordinary officers of the church, provided that there be no apprehension of its being the sole authoritative conveyance of a successive flux of office-power; which is destructive of the whole nature of the institution.

And this may at present suffice, as unto the call of meet persons unto the pastoral office, and consequently any other office in the church. The things following are essentially necessary unto it, so as that authority and right to feed and rule in the church in the name of Christ, as an officer of his house, that may be given unto any one thereby by virtue of his law, and the charter granted by him unto the church itself. The first is, That antecedently unto any actings of the church towards such a person, with respect unto office, he be furnished by the Lord Christ himself with graces, and gifts, and abilities, for the discharge of the office whereunto he is to be called. This divine designation of the person to be called, rests on the kingly office and care of Christ to-

wards his church. Where this is wholly wanting, it is not in the power of any church under heaven, by virtue of any outward order or act, to communicate pastoral or ministerial power unto any person whatever. Secondly, There is to be an exploration or trial of those gifts and abilities as unto their accommodation unto the edification of that church, whereunto any person is to be ordained a pastor or minister. But although the right of judging herein belong unto and reside in the church itself, (for who else is able to judge for them, or is intrusted so to do?) yet is it their wisdom and duty to desire the assistance and guidance of those who are approved in the discharge of their office in other churches. Thirdly, The first act of power committed unto the church by Jesus Christ for the constitution of ordinary officers in it, is that election of a person qualified and tried, unto his office, which we have now vindicated. Fourthly, There is required hereunto the solemn ordination, inauguration, dedication, or setting apart of the persons so chosen by the presbytery of the church with fasting and prayer, and the outward sign of the imposition of hands.

This is that order which the rule of the Scripture, the example of the first churches, and the nature of the things themselves, direct unto. And although I will not say that a defect in any of these, especially if it be from unavoidable hinderances, doth disannul the call of a person to the pastoral office; yet I must say, that where they are not all duly attended unto, the institution of Christ is neglected, and the order of the church infringed: wherefore,

The plea of the communication of all authority for office, and of office itself, solely by a flux of power from the first ordainers, through the hands of their pretended successors in all ages, under all the innumerable miscarriages whereunto they are subject, and have actually fallen into, without any respect unto the consent or call of the churches, by rule, laws and orders, foreign to the Scripture, is contrary to the whole nature of evangelical churches, and all the ends of their institution; as shall be manifested, if it be needful.

CHAP. V.

The especial duty of pastors of churches.

We have declared the way whereby pastors are given unto, and instated in, the church. That which should ensue, is an account of their work and duty in the discharge of their office. But this hath been the subject of many large discourses, both among the ancient writers of the church, and of late. I shall therefore only touch on some things that are of most necessary consideration.

1. The first and principal duty of a pastor, is to feed the flock by diligent preaching of the word. It is a promise relating to the New Testament; that God 'would give unto his church pastors according to his own heart, which should feed them with knowledge and understanding;' Jer. iii. 15. This is by teaching or preaching the word, and no otherwise. This feeding is of the essence of the office of a pastor, as unto the exercise of it; so that he who doth not, or cannot, or will not feed the flock, is no pastor, whatever outward call or work he may have in the church. The care of preaching the gospel was committed to Peter, and in him unto all true pastors of the church under the name of 'feeding;' John xxi. 15, 16. According to the example of the apostles they are to free themselves from all encumbrances, that they may give themselves wholly unto the word and prayer; Acts vi. Their work is 'to labour in the word and doctrine;' 1 Tim. v. 17. and thereby to feed the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers; Acts xx. And it is that, which is every where given them in charge.

This work and duty, therefore, as was said, is essential unto the office of a pastor. A man is a pastor unto them whom he feeds by pastoral teaching, and to no more. And he that doth not so feed, is no pastor. Nor is it required only that he preach now and then at his leisure; but that he lay aside all other employments, though lawful, all other duties in the church, as unto such a constant attendance on them, as would divert him from this work, that he give him-

self unto it, that he be in these things labouring to the utmost of his ability. Without this, no man will be able to give a comfortable account of the pastoral office at the last day.

There is indeed no more required of any man than God giveth him ability for. Weakness, sickness, bodily infirmities, may disenable men from the actual discharge of this duty, in that assiduity and frequency which are required in ordinary cases. And some may through age or other incapacitating distempers, be utterly disabled for it, in which case it is their duty to lay down and take a dismission from their office; or, if their disability be but partial, provide a suitable supply, that the edification of the church be not prejudiced. But for men to pretend themselves pastors of the church, and to be unable for, or negligent of, this work and duty, is to live in open defiance of the commands of Christ.

We have lived to see, or hear of reproachful scorn and contempt cast upon laborious preaching, that is, labouring in the word and doctrine; and all manner of discouragements given unto it, with endeavours for its suppression in sundry instances. Yea, some have proceeded so far, as to declare that the work of preaching is unnecessary in the church, so to reduce all religion to the reading and rule of the liturgy. The next attempt, so far as I know, may be to exclude Christ himself out of their religion, which the denial of a necessity of preaching the gospel makes an entrance into, yea, a good progress towards.

Sundry things are required unto this work and duty of pastoral preaching: As, (1.) Spiritual wisdom and understanding in the mysteries of the gospel; that they may declare unto the church the whole counsel of God, and the unsearchable riches of Christ; see Acts xx. 27. 1 Cor. ii. 4—7. Eph. iii. 8—11. The generality of the church, especially those who are grown in knowledge and experience, have a spiritual insight into these things. And the apostle prays that all believers may have so, Eph. i. 17—19. And if those that instruct them, or should so do, have not some degree of eminency herein, they cannot be useful to lead them on to perfection. And the little care hereof or concernment herein, is that which in our days hath rendered the

ministry of many fruitless and useless. (2.) Experience of the power of the truth which they preach in and upon their own souls. Without this, they will themselves be lifeless and heartless in their own work, and their labour for the most part unprofitable towards others. It is to such men, attended unto as a task for their advantage; or as that which carries some satisfaction in it from ostentation, and supposed reputation wherewith it is accompanied. But a man preacheth that sermon only well unto others, which preacheth itself in his own soul. And he that doth not feed on, and thrive in the digestion of the food which he provides for others, will scarce make it savoury unto them. Yea, he knows not but the food he hath provided may be poison, unless he have really tasted of it himself. If the word doth not dwell with power in us, it will not pass with power from us. And no man lives in a more woeful condition than those who really believe not themselves what they persuade others to believe continually. The want of this experience of the power of gospel truth on their own souls, is that which gives us so many lifeless, sapless orations, quaint in words, and dead as to power, instead of preaching the gospel in the demonstration of the Spirit. And let any say what they please, it is evident, that some men's preaching, as well as others' not preaching, hath lost the credit of their ministry. (3.) Skill to divide the word aright; 2 Tim. ii. 15. And this consists in a practical wisdom upon a diligent attendance unto the word of truth, to find out what is real, substantial, and meet food for the souls of the hearers, to give unto all sorts of persons in the church that which is their proper portion. And this requires, (4.) A prudent and diligent consideration of the state of the flock, over which any man is set, as unto their strength or weakness, their growth or defect in knowledge (the measure of their attainments requiring either milk or strong meat); their temptations and duties, their spiritual decays or thrivings; and that not only in general, but as near as may be with respect unto all the individual members of the church. Without a due regard unto these things, men preach at random, uncertainly fighting, like those that beat the air. Preaching sermons not designed for the advantage of them to whom they are preached; insisting on general doctrines not levelled to the condition

of the auditory; speaking what men can, without consideration of what they ought, are things that will make men weary of preaching, when their minds are not influenced with outward advantages; as much as make others weary in hearing of them. And, (5.) All these, in the whole discharge of their duty, are to be constantly accompanied with the evidence of zeal for the glory of God, and compassion for the souls of men. Where these are not in vigorous exercise, in the minds and souls of them that preach the word, giving a demonstration of themselves unto the consciences of them that hear, the quickening form, the life and soul of preaching, is lost.

All these things seem common, obvious, and universally acknowledged: but the ruin of the ministry of the most for the want of them, or from notable defects in them, is, or may be, no less evidently known. And the very naming of them, which is all at present which I design, is sufficient to evidence how great a necessity there is incumbent on all pastors of churches, to give themselves unto the word and prayer, to labour in the word and doctrine, to be continually intent on this work, to engage all the faculties of their souls, to stir up all their graces and gifts unto constant exercise, in the discharge of their duty. For 'who is sufficient for these things?' And as the consideration of them is sufficient to stir up all ministers unto fervent prayer for supplies of divine aids and assistance, for that work which in their own strength they can no way answer; so is it enough to warn them of the avoidance of all things that would give them a diversion or avocation from the constant attendance unto the discharge of it.

When men undertake the pastoral office, and either judge it not their duty to preach, or are not able so to do, or attempt it only at some solemn seasons, or attend unto it as a task required of them without that wisdom, skill, diligence, care, prudence, zeal, and compassion, which are required thereunto, the glory and use of the ministry will be utterly destroyed.

2. The second duty of a pastor towards his flock, is, continual fervent prayer for them.[t] 'Give ourselves unto the

[t] Jam. v. 16. John xvii. 20. Exod. xxxii. 11. Deut. ix. 18. Levit. xvi. 24. 1 Sam. xii. 23. 2 Cor. xiii. 7, 9. Eph. i. 15—17. iii. 14. Phil. i. 4. Col. i. 3. 2 Thess. i. 11.

word and prayer.' Without this, no man can or doth preach to them as he ought, nor perform any other duty of his pastoral office. From hence may any man take the best measure of the discharge of his duty towards his flock. He that doth constantly, diligently, fervently pray for them, will have a testimony in himself of his own sincerity in the discharge of all other pastoral duties; nor can he voluntarily omit or neglect any of them. And as for those who are negligent herein, be their pains, labour, and travail in other duties never so great, they may be influenced from other reasons, and so give no evidence of sincerity in the discharge of their office. In this constant prayer for the church, which is so incumbent on all pastors, as that whatever is done without it, is of no esteem in the sight of Jesus Christ; respect is to be had, (1.) Unto the success of the word, unto all the blessed ends of it among them. These are no less than the improvement and strengthening of all their graces, the direction of all their duties, their edification in faith and love, with the entire conduct of their souls in the life of God, unto the enjoyment of him. To preach the word therefore, and not to follow it with constant and fervent prayer for its success, is to disbelieve its use, neglect its end, and to cast away the seed of the gospel at random. (2) Unto the temptations that the church is generally exposed unto. These greatly vary, according unto the outward circumstances of things. The temptations in general that accompany a state of outward peace and tranquillity, are of another nature than those that attend a time of trouble, persecution, distress, and poverty. And so it is as unto other occasions and circumstances. These the pastors of churches ought diligently to consider, looking on them as the means and ways whereby churches have been ruined, and the souls of many lost for ever. With respect unto them, therefore, ought their prayers for the church to be fervent. (3.) Unto the especial state and condition of all the members, so far as it is known unto them. There may be of them, who are spiritually sick and diseased, tempted, afflicted, bemisted, wandering out of the way, surprised in sins and miscarriages, disconsolate and troubled in Spirit in a peculiar manner. The remembrance of them all ought to abide with them, and to be continually called over in their daily pastoral sup-

plications. (4.) Unto the presence of Christ in the assemblies of the church, with all the blessed evidences and testimonies of it. This is that alone which gives life and power unto all church assemblies; without which, all outward order and forms of divine worship in them, are but a dead carcase. Now this presence of Christ in the assemblies of his church is by his Spirit, accompanying all ordinances of worship with a gracious divine efficacy, evidencing itself by blessed operations on the minds and hearts of the congregation. This are pastors of churches continually to pray for, and they will do so, who understand that all the success of their labours, and all the acceptance of the church with God in their duties, do depend hereon. (5.) To their preservation in faith, love and fruitfulness, with all the duties that belong unto them, &c.

It were much to be desired, that all those who take upon them this pastoral office, did well consider and understand how great and necessary a part of their work and duty doth consist in their continual fervent prayer for their flocks. For besides that it is the only instituted way, whereby they may by virtue of their office bless their congregations, so will they find their hearts and minds, in and by the discharge of it, more and more filled with love, and engaged with diligence, unto all other duties of their office, and excited unto the exercise of all grace towards the whole church on all occasions. And where any are negligent herein, there is no duty which they perform towards the church, but it is influenced with false considerations, and will not hold weight in the balance of the sanctuary.

3. The administration of the seals of the covenant is committed unto them as the stewards of the house of Christ. For unto them the authoritative dispensation of the word is committed, whereunto the administration of the seals is annexed. For their principal end is, the peculiar confirmation and application of the word preached. And herein there are three things that they are to attend unto. (1.) The times and seasons of their administration unto the church's edification, especially that of the Lord's supper, whose frequency is enjoined. It is the duty of pastors to consider all the necessary circumstances of their administration, as unto time, place, frequency, order, and decency. (2.) To keep severely

unto the institution of Christ, as unto the way and manner of their administration. The gradual introduction of uninstituted rites and ceremonies into the church celebration of the ordinance of the Lord's supper, ended at length in the idolatry of the mass. Herein then, alone, and not in bowing, cringing, and vestments, lies the glory and beauty of these administrations; namely, that they are compliant with, and expressive of, the institution of Christ; nor is any thing done in them, but in express obedience unto his authority. 'I have received of the Lord, that which I delivered unto you,' saith the apostle in this case, 1 Cor. xi. 23. (3.) To take care that these holy things be administered only unto those who are meet and worthy, according unto the rule of the gospel. Those who impose on pastors the promiscuous administration of these divine ordinances, or the application of the seals unto all without difference, do deprive them of one half of their ministerial office and duty.

But here it is inquired by some, 'Whether in case a church have no pastor at present, or a teaching elder with pastoral power, whether it may not delegate and appoint the administration of these especial ordinances, unto some member of the church at this or that season, who is meetly qualified for the outward administration of them?' which for the sake of some I shall examine.

1. No church is complete in order without teaching officers; Eph. iv. 11, 12. 1 Cor. xii. 27, 28.

A church not complete in order cannot be complete in administrations; because the power of administrations depends upon the power of order proportionably; that is, the power of the church depends upon the being of the church. Hence the first duty of a church without officers, is to obtain them according to rule. And to endeavour to complete administrations, without an antecedent completing of order, is contrary unto the mind of Christ; Acts xiv. 23. Tit. i. 5. 'That thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every church.' The practice therefore proposed is irregular and contrary to the mind of Christ.

The order of the church is twofold; as essential, as organical. The order of the church as essential, and its power

thence arising is, First, For its preservation. Secondly, For its perfection. (1.) For its preservation, in admission and exclusion of members. (2.) For its perfection, in the election of officers.

No part of this power which belongs to the church as essentially considered, can be delegated, but must be acted by the whole church. They cannot delegate power to some to admit members, so as it should not be an act of the whole church. They cannot delegate power to any to elect officers; nor any thing else which belongs to them as a church essentially. The reason is, things that belong unto the essence of any thing, belong unto it formally as such, and so cannot be transferred.

The church, therefore, cannot delegate the power and authority inquired after, should it be supposed to belong to the power of order, as the church is essentially considered; which yet it doth not.

If the church may delegate or substitute others for the discharge of all ordinances whatsoever, without elders or pastors, then it may perfect the saints, and complete the work of the ministry without them, which is contrary to Eph. iv. 11, 12. and, Secondly, It would render the ministry only convenient, and not absolutely necessary to the church, which is contrary to the institution of it.

A particular church, in order, as organical, is the adequate subject of all ordinances, and not as essential; because as essential it never doth nor can enjoy all ordinances, namely, the ministry in particular, whereby it is constituted organical. Yet on this supposition the church, as essentially considered, is the sole adequate subject of all ordinances.

Though the church be the only subject, it is not the only object of gospel ordinances, but that is various. For instance,

1. The preaching of the word: its first object is the world, for conversion; its next, professors, for edification.

2. Baptism: its only object is neither the world nor the members of a particular church, but professors, with those that are reckoned to them by God's appointment; that is, their infant seed.

3. The supper: its object is a particular church only,

which is acknowledged; and may be proved by the institution, one special end of it, and the necessity of discipline thereon depending.

Ordinances, whereof the church is the only subject and the only object, cannot be administered authoritatively, but by officers only. (1.) Because none but Christ's stewards have authority in and towards his house as such; 1 Cor. iv. 1. 1 Tim. iii. 15. Matt. xxiv. 25. (2.) Because it is an act of office-authority to represent Christ to the whole church, and to feed the whole flock thereby; Acts xx. 28. 1 Pet. v. 2.

There are no footsteps of any such practice among the churches of God, who walked in order; neither in the Scripture, nor in all antiquity.

But it is objected by those who allow this practice, 'That if the church may appoint or send a person forth to preach, or appoint a brother to preach unto themselves; then they may appoint him to administer the ordinance of the supper.'

Ans. Here is a mistake in the supposition. The church, that is the body of it, cannot send out any brother authoritatively to preach. Two things are required thereunto; collation of gifts, and communication of office; neither of which, the church under that consideration can do to one that is sent forth. But where God gives gifts by his Spirit, and a call by his providence, the church only complies therewith; not in communicating authority to the person, but in praying for a blessing upon his work.

The same is the case in desiring a brother to teach among them. The duty is moral in its own nature; the gifts and call are from God alone, the occasion of his exercise is only administered by the church.

It is farther added by the same persons, that, 'If a brother, or one who is a disciple, only may baptize, then he may also administer the Lord's supper, being desired of the church.'

Ans. The supposition is not granted nor proved, but there is yet a difference between these ordinances; the object of one being professors, as such, at large; the object of the other being professors, as members of a particular church. But to return,

4. It is incumbent on them to preserve the truth or doctrine of the gospel received and professed in the church, and to defend it against all opposition. This is one principal end of the ministry, one principal means of the preservation of the faith once delivered unto the saints. This is committed in an especial manner unto the pastors of the churches, as the apostle frequently and emphatically repeats the charge of it unto Timothy, and in him unto all, to whom the dispensation of the word is committed; 1 Epist. i. 1—4. iv. 6, 7. 16. vi. 20. 2 Epist. i. 14. 22. iii. 14—16. The same he giveth in charge unto the elders of the church of Ephesus; Acts xx. 28—30. What he says of himself, that the 'glorious gospel of the blessed God was committed unto his trust,' 1 Tim. i. 11. is true of all pastors of churches according to their measure and call; and they should all aim at the account which he gives of his ministry herein; 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith;' 2 Tim. iii. 7. The church is the ground and pillar of truth; and it is so principally in its ministry. And the sinful neglect of this duty is that which was the cause of most of the pernicious heresies and errors that have infested and ruined the church. Those whose duty it was to preserve the doctrine of the gospel entire in the public profession of it, have many of them spoken perverse things to draw away disciples after them: bishops, presbyters, public teachers, have been the ringleaders in heresies. Wherefore this duty, especially at this time, when the fundamental truths of the gospel are on all sides impugned from all sorts of adversaries, is in an especial manner to be attended unto.

Sundry things are required hereunto; as, (1.) A clear, sound, comprehensive knowledge of the entire doctrine of the gospel, attained by all means useful and commonly prescribed unto that end, especially diligent study of the Scripture, with fervent prayer for illumination and understanding. Men cannot preserve that for others, which they are ignorant of themselves. Truth may be lost by weakness, as well as by wickedness. And the defect herein in many is deplorable. (2.) Love of the truth, which they have so learned and comprehended. Unless we look on truth as a pearl, as that which is valued at any rate, bought with any price, as that which is better than all the world, we shall not endeavour

its preservation with that diligence which is required. Some are ready to part with truth at an easy rate, or to grow indifferent about it, whereof we have multitudes of examples in the days wherein we live. It were easy to give instances of sundry important evangelical truths, which our forefathers in the faith contended for with all earnestness, and were ready to seal with their blood, which are now utterly disregarded and opposed by some who pretend to succeed them in their profession. If ministers have not a sense of that power of truth in their own souls, and a taste of its goodness, the discharge of this duty is not to be expected from them. (3.) A conscientious care and fear of giving countenance or encouragement unto novel opinions, especially such as oppose any truth, of whose power and efficacy experience hath been had among them that believe. Vain curiosity, boldness in conjectures, and readiness to vent their own conceits, have caused no small trouble and damage unto the church. (4.) Learning and ability of mind to discern and disprove the oppositions of the adversaries of the truth, and thereby to stop their mouths, and convince gainsayers. (5.) The solid confirmation of the most important truths of the gospel, and whereunto all others are resolved in their teaching and ministry. Men may, and do ofttimes prejudice, yea, betray the truth, by the weakness of their pleas for it. (6.) A diligent watch over their own flocks, against the crafts of seducers from without, or the springing up of any bitter root of error among themselves. (7.) A concurrent assistance with the elders and messengers of other churches, with whom they are in communion, in the declaration of the faith which they all profess; whereof we must treat afterward more at large.

It is evident what learning, labour, study, pains, ability, and exercise of the rational faculties are ordinarily required unto the right discharge of these duties. And where men may be useful to the church in other things, but are defective in these, it becomes them to walk and act both circumspectly and humbly, frequently desiring and adhering unto the advices of them whom God hath intrusted with more talents and greater abilities.

5. It belongs unto their charge and office, diligently to labour for the conversion of souls unto God. The ordinary

means of conversion is left unto the church, and its duty it is to attend unto it. Yea, one of the principal ends of the institution and preservation of churches, is the conversion of souls, and when there are no more to be converted, there shall be no more church on the earth. To enlarge the kingdom of Christ, to diffuse the light and savour of the gospel, to be subservient unto the calling of the elect, or gathering all the sheep of Christ into his fold, are things that God designs by his churches in this world. Now the principal instrumental cause of all these, is the preaching of the word, and this is committed unto the pastors of the churches. It is is true, men may be, and often are, converted unto God by their occasional dispensation of the word who are not called unto office; for, it is the gospel itself that is the 'power of God unto salvation,' by whomsoever it is administered, and it hath been effectual unto that end, even in the necessary occasional teaching of women. But it is so frequently in the exercise of spiritual gifts, by them who are not stated officers of the church; 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. Phil. i. 14, 15. 18. 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11. But yet this hinders not, but that the administration of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, as unto all the ends of it, is committed unto the pastors of the church. And the first object of the preaching of the gospel, is the world, or the men of it for their conversion. And it is so in the preaching of all them unto whom that work is committed by Christ. The work of the apostles and evangelists had this order in it. First, they were to make disciples of men, by the preaching of the gospel unto conversion, and this was their principal work, as Paul testifieth, 1 Cor. i. 17. And herein were they gloriously instrumental, in laying the foundation of the kingdom of Christ all the world over. The second part of their work was, to teach them that they were converted or made disciples, to do and observe all that he did command them. In the pursuit of this part of their commission, they gathered the disciples of Christ into churches, under ordinary officers of their own. And although the work of these ordinary officers, pastors, and teachers, be of the same nature with theirs, yet the method of it is changed in them. For their first ordinary work is to conduct and teach all the disciples of Christ to do and observe all things appointed by

him; that is, to preach unto and watch over their particular flocks, unto whom they do relate. But they are not hereby discharged from an interest in the other part of the work in preaching the word unto the conversion of souls. They are not indeed bound unto the method of the apostles and evangelists; yea, they are, by virtue of their office, ordinarily excluded from it. After a man is called to be a pastor of a particular church, it is not his duty to leave that church, and go up and down to preach for the conversion of strangers. It is not, I say, ordinarily so; for many cases may fall out wherein the edification of any particular church is to give way unto the glory of Christ, with respect unto the calling of all the members of the church catholic. But in the discharge of the pastoral office, there are many occasions of preaching the word unto the conversion of souls. As, (1.) When any that are unconverted do come into the assemblies of the church, and are there wrought upon by the power of the word, whereof we have experience every day. To suppose that a man at the same time, and in the same place, preaching unto one congregation, should preach to some of them, namely, those that are of the church whereunto he relates, as a minister with ministerial authority; and to others only by virtue of a spiritual gift, which he hath received, is that which no man can distinguish in his own conscience, nor is there any colour of rule or reason for it. For though pastors, with respect unto their whole office, and all the duties of it, whereof many can have the church only for their object, are ministers in office unto the church, and so ministers of the church; yet are they ministers of Christ also; and by him it is, and not by the church, that the preaching of the gospel is committed unto them. And it is so committed, as that by virtue of their office they are to use it unto all its ends, in his way and method, whereof the conversion of sinners is one. And for a man to conceive of himself in a double capacity whilst he is preaching to the same congregation, is that which no man's experience can reach unto. (2.) In occasional preaching in other places, whereunto a pastor of a church may be called and directed by divine providence. For, although we have no concernment in the figment of an indelible character accompanying sacred orders; yet we do

not think that the pastoral office is such a thing as a man must leave behind him every time he goes from home; or that it is in his own power, or in the power of all men in the world, to divest him of it, unless he be dismissed or deposed from it by Christ himself, through the rule of his word. Wherever a true minister preacheth, he preacheth as a minister; for, as such the administration of the gospel is committed unto him, as unto all the ends of it; whereof, the chief, as was said, is the conversion of souls. Yea, of such weight it is, that the conveniency and edification of particular churches ought to give place unto it. When therefore there are great opportunities, and providential calls for the preaching of the gospel unto the conversion of souls, and the harvest being great there are not labourers sufficient for it; it is lawful, yea, it is the duty of pastors of particular churches, to leave their constant attendance on their pastoral charge in those churches, at least for a season, to apply themselves unto the more public preaching of the word unto the conversion of the souls of men. Nor will any particular church be unwilling hereunto, which understands that even the whole end of particular churches is but the edification of the church catholic; and that their good and advantage is to give place unto that of the glory of Christ in the whole. The good shepherd will leave the ninety and nine sheep, to seek after one that wanders; and we may certainly leave a few for a season, to seek after a great multitude of wanderers, when we are called thereunto by divine providence. And I could heartily wish that we might have a trial of it at this time.

The ministers who have been most celebrated, and that deservedly, in the last ages, in this and the neighbour nations, have been such as whose ministry God made eminently successful unto the conversion of souls. To affirm that they did not do their work as ministers, and by virtue of their ministerial office, is to cast away the crown, and destroy the principal glory of the ministry. For my own part, if I did not think myself bound to preach as a minister, and as a minister authorized in all places, and on all occasions when I am called thereunto, I think I should never preach much more in this world. Nor do I know at all what rule they walk by, who continue public constant preaching

for many years, and yet neither desire nor design to be called unto any pastoral office in the church. But I must not here insist on the debate of these things.

6. It belongs unto men, on the account of their pastoral office, to be ready, willing, and able, to comfort, relieve, and refresh those that are tempted, tossed, wearied with fears and grounds of disconsolation in times of trial and desertion. The tongue of the learned is required in them, that they should know how to speak a word in season unto him that is weary. One excellent qualification of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the discharge of his priestly office now in heaven, is, that he is touched with a sense of our infirmities, and knows how to succour them that are tempted. His whole flock in this world are a company of tempted ones. His own life on the earth, he calls the time of his temptation. And those who have the charge of his flock under him, ought to have a sense of their infirmities, and endeavour in an especial manner to succour them that are tempted. But amongst them, there are some always that are cast under darkness and disconsolations in a peculiar manner; some at the entrance of their conversion unto God, whilst they have a deep sense of the terror of the Lord, the sharpness of conviction, and the uncertainty of their condition. Some are relapsed into sin or omissions of duties; some under great, sore, and lasting afflictions; some upon pressing, urgent, particular occasions; some on sovereign, divine desertions; some through the buffetings of Satan, and the injections of blasphemous thoughts into their minds, with many other occasions of an alike nature. Now the troubles, disconsolations, dejections, and fears that arise in the minds of persons in these exercises and temptations, are various, oftentimes urged and fortified with subtle arguing, and fair pretences, perplexing the souls of men almost to despair and death. It belongs unto the office and duty of pastors,

1. To be able rightly to understand the various cases that will occur of this kind, from such principles and grounds of truth and experience, as will bear a just confidence in a prudent application unto the relief of them concerned. The 'tongue of the learned to know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.' It will not be done by a collection and determination of cases, which yet is useful in its place.

For hardly shall we meet with two cases of this kind, that will exactly be determined by the same rule; all manner of circumstances giving them variety. But a skill, understanding, and experience in the whole nature of the work of the Spirit of God on the souls of men; of the conflict that is between the flesh and the Spirit; of the methods and wiles of Satan, of the wiles of principalities and powers or wicked spirits in high places; of the nature, and effects, and ends of divine desertions, with wisdom to make application out of such principles, or fit medicines and remedies unto every sore and distemper, are required hereunto. These things are by some despised, by some neglected, by some looked after only in stated cases of conscience; in which work it is known that some have horribly debauched their own consciences and others, to the scandal and ruin of religion, so far as they have prevailed. But not to dispute how far such helps, as books written of cases of conscience, may be useful herein, which they may be greatly unto those who know how to use them aright; the proper ways whereby pastors and teachers must obtain this skill and understanding, is, by diligent study of the Scriptures, meditation thereon, fervent prayer, experience of spiritual things, and temptations in their own souls, with a prudent observation of the manner of God's dealing with others, and the ways of the opposition made to the work of his grace in them. Without these things all pretences unto this ability and duty of the pastoral office are vain; whence it is that the whole work of it is much neglected.

2. To be ready and willing to attend unto the especial cases that may be brought unto them, and not to look on them as unnecessary diversions; whereas a due application unto them is a principal part of their office and duty. To discountenance, to discourage any from seeking relief in perplexities of this nature, to carry it towards them with a seeming moroseness and unconcernedness, is to turn that which is lame out of the way, to push the diseased, and not at all to express the care of Christ towards his flock; Isa. xl. 11. Yea, it is their duty to hearken after them who may be so exercised, to seek them out, to give them their counsel and directions on all occasions.

3. To bear patiently and tenderly with the weakness,

ignorance, dulness, slowness to believe and receive satisfaction, yea, it may be, impertinencies in them that are so tempted. These things will abound amongst them, partly from their natural infirmities, many being weak, and perhaps froward; but especially from the nature of their temptations, which are suited to disorder and disquiet their minds, to fill them with perplexed thoughts, and to make them jealous of every thing wherein they are spiritually concerned And if much patience, meekness, and condescension be not exercised towards them, they are quickly turned out of the way.

In the discharge of the whole pastoral office, there is not any thing or duty that is of more importance, nor wherein the Lord Jesus Christ is more concerned, nor more eminently suited unto the nature of the office itself, than this is. But, whereas it is a work or duty, which because of the reasons mentioned, must be accompanied with the exercise of humility, patience, self-denial, and spiritual wisdom, with experience, with wearisome diversions from other occasions; those who had got of old the conduct of the souls of men into their management, turned this whole part of their office and duty into an engine they called auricular confession, whereby they wrested the consciences of Christians to the promotion of their own ease, wealth, authority, and ofttimes to worse ends.

7. A compassionate suffering with all the members of the church in all their trials and troubles, whether internal, or external, belongs unto them in the discharge of their office. Nor is there any thing that renders them more like unto Jesus Christ, whom to represent unto the church, is their principal duty. The view and consideration by faith of the glory of Christ in his compassion with his suffering members, is the principal spring of consolation unto the church in all its distresses. And the same spirit, the same mind herein, ought, according to their measure, to be in all that have the pastoral office committed unto them. So the apostle expresseth it in himself: 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?' 2 Cor. xi. 29. And unless this compassion and goodness do run through the discharge of their whole office, men cannot be said to be evangelical shepherds, nor the sheep said in any sense

to be their own. For those who pretend unto the pastoral office, to live, it may be, in wealth and pleasure, regardless of the sufferings and temptations of their flock, or of the poor of it; or related unto such churches, as wherein it is impossible that they should so much as be acquainted with the state of the greatest part of them, is not answerable unto the institution of their office, nor to the design of Christ therein.

8. Care of the poor, and visitation of the sick, are parts of this duty, commonly known, though commonly neglected.

9. The principal care of the rule of the church is incumbent on the pastors of it. This is the second general head of the power and duty of this office, whereunto many things in particular do belong. But because I shall treat afterward of the rule of the church by itself distinctly, I shall not here insist upon it.

10. There is a communion to be observed among all the churches of the same faith and profession in any nation. Wherein it doth consist, and what is required thereunto, shall be afterward declared. The principal care hereof, unto the edification of the churches, is incumbent on the pastors of them. Whether it be exercised by letters of mutual advice, of congratulation or consolation, or in testimony of communion with those who are called to office in them, or whether it be by convening in synods for consultation of their joint concernments (which things made up a great part of the primitive ecclesiastical polity); their duty it is to attend unto it, and to take care of it.

11. That wherewith I shall close these few instances of the pastoral charge and duty, is, that without which all the rest will neither be useful unto men, nor be accepted with the great Shepherd Christ Jesus. And that is a humble, holy, exemplary conversation in all godliness and honesty. The rules and precepts of the Scripture, the examples of Christ and his apostles, with that of the bishops or pastors of the primitive churches, and the nature of the thing itself, with the religion which we do profess, do undeniably prove this duty to be necessary and indispensable in a gospel ministry. It were an easy thing to fill up a volume with ancient examples unto this purpose; with testimonies of the Scripture and first writers among Christians, with examples

of public and private miscarriages herein, with evident demonstration, that the ruin of Christian religion in most nations where it hath been professed, and so of the nations themselves, hath proceeded from the ambition, pride, luxury, uncleanness, profaneness, and otherways vicious conversations of those who have been called the clergy. And in daily observation, it is a thing written with the beams of the sun, that whatever else be done in churches, if the pastors of them, or those who are so esteemed, are not exemplary in gospel obedience and holiness, religion will not be carried on and improved among the people. If persons, light or profane in their habits, garbs, and converse, corrupt in their communication, unsavoury and barren as unto spiritual discourse; if such as are covetous, oppressive, and contentious; such as are negligent in holy duties in their own families, and so cannot stir up others unto diligence therein; much more, if such as are openly sensual, vicious, and debauched, are admitted into this office, we may take our leave of all the glory and power of religion among the people committed unto their charge.

To handle this property or adjunct of the pastoral office, it were necessary distinctly to consider and explain all the qualifications assigned by the apostle as necessary unto bishops and elders, evidenced as previously necessary unto the orderly call of them unto this office; 1 Tim. iii. 2—7. Tit. ii. 6—9. which is a work not consistent with my present design to engage in.

These are some instances of the things wherein the office-duty of pastors of the church doth consist. They are but some of them, and those only proposed, not pursued and pressed with the consideration of all those particular duties, with the manner of their performance, way of management, motives and enforcements, defects and causes of them, which would require a large discourse. These may suffice unto our present purpose; and we may derive from them the ensuing brief considerations.

1. A due meditation and view of these things, as proposed in the Scripture, is enough to make the wisest, the best of men, and the most diligent in the discharge of the pastoral office, to cry out with the apostle, 'and who is sufficient for these things?' This will make them look well to

their call and entrance into this office, as that alone which will bear them out and justify them in the susception of it. For no sense of insufficiency can utterly discourage any in the undertaking of a work, which he is assured that the Lord Christ calls him unto. For where he calls to a duty, he gives competent strength for the performance of it. And when we say, under a deep sense of our own weakness, 'who is sufficient for these things?' he doth say, 'My grace is sufficient for you.'

2. Although all the things mentioned, do plainly, evidently, and undeniably belong unto the discharge of the pastoral office, yet, in point of fact we find by the success, that they are very little considered by the most that seek after it. And the present ruin of religion, as unto its power, beauty, and glory in all places, ariseth principally from this cause, that multitudes of those who undertake this office, are neither in any measure fit for it, nor do either conscientiously attend unto, or diligently perform, the duties that belong unto it. It ever was, and ever will be true in general; like priest, like people.

3. Whereas the account which is to be given of this office and the discharge of it at the last day unto Jesus Christ, the consideration whereof had a mighty influence upon the apostles themselves, and all the primitive pastors of the churches, is frequently proposed unto us, and many warnings given us thereon in the Scripture; yet it is apparent they are but few who take it into due consideration. In the great day of Christ's visitation, he will proceed on such articles as those here laid down, and others expressed in the Scripture, and not at all on those which are now inquired upon in our episcopal visitations. And if they may be minded of their true interest and concern, whilst they possess the places they hold in the church, without offence, I would advise them to confirm their inquiries in their visitations unto those, which they cannot but know the Lord Christ will make in the great day of his visitation, which doth approach: this I think but reasonable. In the mean time, for those who desire to give up their account with joy and confidence, and not with grief and confusion, it is their wisdom and duty continually to bear in mind what it is that the Lord Christ requires of them in the discharge of their office. To

take benefices, to perform legal duties by themselves or others, is not fully compliant with what pastors of churches are called unto.

4. It is manifest also from hence, how inconsistent it is with this office, and the due discharge of it, for any one man to undertake the relation of a pastor unto more churches than one, especially if far distant from one another. An evil this is, like that of mathematical prognostications at Rome, always condemned and always retained. But one view of the duties incumbent on each pastor, and of whose diligent performance he is to give an account at the last day, will discard this practice from all approbation in the minds of them that are sober. However, it is as good to have ten churches at once, as, having but one, never to discharge the duty of a pastor towards it.

5. All churches may do well to consider the weight and burden that lies upon their pastors and teachers, in the discharge of their office, that they may be constant in fervent prayers and supplications for them; as also to provide, what lies in them, that they may be without trouble and cares about the things of this life.

6. There being so many duties necessary unto the discharge of their office, and those of such various sorts and kinds, as to require various gifts and abilities unto their due performance, it seems very difficult to find a concurrence of them in any one person, in any considerable degree, so as that it is hard to conceive how the office itself should be duly discharged. I answer, (1.) The end both of the office, and of the discharge of it, is the due edification of the church; this therefore gives them their measure. Where that is attained, the office is duly discharged, though the gifts whereby men are enabled thereunto be not eminent. (2.) Where a man is called unto this office, and applieth himself sincerely unto the due discharge of it, if he be evidently defective with respect to any especial duty or duties of it, that defect is to be supplied by calling any other unto his assistance in office, who is qualified to make that supply unto the edification of the church. And the like must be said concerning such pastors, as through age or bodily weakness are disabled from attendance unto any part of their duty; for still the edifica-

tion of the church is that, which in all these things is in the first place to be provided for,

7. It may be inquired, what is the state of those churches, and what relation, with respect unto communion, we ought to have unto them whose pastors are evidently defective in, or neglective of these things, so as that they are not in any competent measure attended unto. And we may in particular instance in the first and last of the pastoral duties before insisted on. Suppose a man be no way able to preach the word unto the edification of them that are pleaded to be his flock; or having any ability, yet doth not, will not, give himself unto the word and prayer, or not labour in the word and doctrine, unto the great prejudice of edification: and suppose the same person be openly defective, as unto an exemplary conversation, and on the contrary, layeth the stumbling-block of his own sins and follies before the eyes of others; what shall we judge of his ministry, and of the state of that church whereof he is a constituent part, as its ruler? I answer:

1. I do not believe it is in the power of any church really to confer the pastoral office by virtue of any ordination whatever, unto any who are openly and evidently destitute of all those previous qualifications which the Scripture requireth in them who are to be called unto this office. There is indeed a latitude to be allowed in judging of them in times of necessity and great penury of able teachers; so that persons in holy ministry design the glory of God and the edification of the church, according to their ability. But otherwise there is a nullity in the pretended office.

2. Where any such are admitted through ignorance or mistake, or the usurpation of undue power over churches, in imposing ministers on them, there is not an absolute nullity in their administrations, until they are discovered and convicted by the rule and law of Christ. But if on evidence hereof, the people will voluntarily adhere unto them, they are partakers of their sins, and do what in them lies to unchurch themselves.

3. Where such persons are by any means placed as pastors in or over any churches, and there is no way for the removal or reformation, it is lawful unto, it is the duty of every

one who takes care of his own edification and salvation, to withdraw from the communion of such churches, and to join with such as wherein edification is better provided for. For whereas this is the sole end of churches, of all their offices, officers, and administrations; it is the highest folly to imagine that any disciple of Christ can be, or is obliged by his authority to abide in the communion of such churches, without seeking relief in the ways of his appointment, wherein that end is utterly overthrown.

4. Where the generality of churches in any kind of association are headed by pastors defective in these things, in the matter declared, there all public church reformation is morally impossible; and it is the duty of private men to take care of their own souls, let churches and churchmen say what they please.

Some few things may yet be inquired into, with reference unto the office of a pastor in the church. As,

1. Whether a man may be ordained a pastor or a minister, without relation unto any particular church, so as to be invested with office-power thereby.

It is usually said, that a man may be ordained a minister unto, or of the catholic church, or to convert infidels, although he be not related unto any particular flock or congregation.

I shall not at present discuss sundry things about the power and way of ordination which influence this controversy, but only speak briefly unto the thing itself: And,

1. It is granted that a man endowed with spiritual gifts for the preaching of the gospel, may be set apart by fasting and prayer unto that work, when he may be orderly called unto it in the providence of God. For, (1.) Such an one hath a call unto it materially in the gifts which he hath received, warranting him unto the exercise of them for the edification of others, as he hath occasion; 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11. 1 Cor. xiv. 12. Setting apart unto an important work by prayer is a moral duty, and useful in church affairs in an especial manner; Acts xiii. 12. (2.) A public testimony unto the approbation of a person undertaking the work of preaching is necessary. [1.] Unto the communion of churches, that he may be received in any of them as is occasion; of which sort were the letters of recommendation in the primi-

tive church; 1 Cor. xvi. 3. 2 Cor. iii. 1. 3. John ix. [2.] Unto the safety of them, amongst whom he may exercise his gifts, that they be not imposed on by false teachers or seducers. Nor would the primitive church allow, nor is it allowable in the communion of churches, that any person not so testified unto, not so sent and warranted, should undertake constantly to preach the gospel.

2. Such persons so set apart and sent, may be esteemed ministers in the general notion of the word, and may be useful in the calling and planting of churches, wherein they may be instated in the pastoral office. This was originally the work of evangelists, which office being ceased in the church (as shall be proved elsewhere), the work may be supplied by persons of this sort.

3. No church whatever hath power to ordain men ministers for the conversion of infidels. Since the cessation of extraordinary officers and offices, the care of that work is devolved merely on the providence of God, being left without the verge of church institutions. God alone can send and warrant men for the undertaking of that work. Nor can any man know, or be satisfied in a call unto that work, without some previous guidance of divine providence leading him thereunto. It is indeed the duty of all the ordinary ministers of the church to diffuse the knowledge of Christ and the gospel unto the heathen and infidels, among whom, or near unto whom, their habitation is cast; and they have all manner of divine warranty for their so doing; as many worthy persons have done effectually in New England. And it is the duty of every true Christian, who may be cast among them by the providence of God, to instruct them according unto his ability in the knowledge of the truth: but it is not in the power of any church, or any sort of ordinary officers, to ordain a person unto the office of the ministry for the conversion of the heathen, antecedently unto any designation by divine providence thereunto.

4. No man can be properly or completely ordained unto the ministry, but he is ordained unto a determinate office; as a bishop, an elder, a pastor. But this no man can be, but he who is ordained in and unto a particular church. For the contrary practice,

1. Would be contrary to the constant practice of the

apostles, who ordained no ordinary officers, but in and unto particular churches, which were to be their proper charge and care; Acts xiv. 23. Tit. i. 5. Nor is there mention of any ordinary officers in the whole Scripture, but such as were fixed in the particular churches whereunto they did relate; Acts xx. 28. Phil. i. 1. Rev. ii. 3. Nor was any such practice known or heard of in the primitive church: Yea,

2. It was absolutely forbidden in the ancient church, and all such ordinations declared null, so as not to communicate office-power or give any ministerial authority. So it is expressly in the first canon of the council of Chalcedon, and the council decrees, 'That all imposition of hands, in such cases, is invalid and of no effect.' Yea, so exact and careful were they in this matter, that if any one for any just cause, as he judged himself, did leave his particular church or charge, they would not allow him the name or title of a bishop, or to officiate occasionally in that church, or any where else. This is evident in the case of Eustathius, a bishop of Pamphilia. The good man finding the discharge of his office very troublesome, by reason of secular businesses that it was incumbered withal, and much opposition, with reproach that befell him from the church itself, of his own accord laid down and resigned his charge, the church choosing one Theodorus in his room. But afterward he desired, that though he had left his charge, he might retain the name, title, and honour of a bishop: for this end he made a petition unto the council of Ephesus, who, as themselves express it, in mere commiseration unto the old man, condescended unto his desire as unto the name and title, but not as unto any office-power, which, they judge, related absolutely unto a particular charge; Epist. Conc. Ephes. 1. ad Synod. in Pamphil.

3. Such ordination wants an essential constitutive cause, and part of the collation of office-power, which is the election of the people, and is therefore invalid. See what hath been proved before unto that purpose.

4. A bishop, an elder, a pastor, being terms of relation, to make any one so without relation unto a church, a people, a flock, is to make him a father who hath no child, or a husband who hath no wife, a relate without a correlate, which is impossible, and implies a contradiction.

5. It is inconsistent with the whole nature and end of the pastoral office. Whoever is duly called, set apart, or ordained unto that office, he doth therein and thereby take on himself the discharge of all the duties belonging thereunto, and is obliged to attend diligently unto them. If then we will take a view of what hath been proved before to belong unto this office, we shall find, that not the least part, scarce any thing of it, can be undertaken and discharged by such as are ordained absolutely without relation unto particular churches. For any to take upon them to commit an office unto others, and not at the same time charge them with all the duties of that office and their immediate attendance on them; or for any to accept of an office and office-power, not knowing when or where to exert the power or perform the duties of it, is irregular. In particular, ruling is an essential part of the pastoral office, which they cannot attend unto who have none to be ruled by them.

2. May a pastor remove from one congregation unto another?

This is a thing also which the ancient church made great provision against. For when some churches were increased in members, reputation, privileges and wealth above others, is grew an ordinary practice for the bishops to design and endeavour their own removal from a less unto a greater benefice. This is so severely interdicted in the councils of Nice and Chalcedon, as that they would not allow that a man might be a bishop or presbyter in any other place, but only in the church wherein he was originally ordained: and therefore, if any did so remove themselves, decreed, that they should be sent home again, and there abide, or cease to be church officers; Council. Nicæ, can. 15, 16. Chalced. can. 5. 20. Pluralities, as they are called, and open contending for ecclesiastical promotions, benefices, and dignities, were then either unknown, or openly condemned.

Yet it cannot be denied, but that there may be just causes of the removal of a pastor from one congregation unto another; for, whereas the end of all particular churches is to promote the edification of the catholic church in general; where, in any especial instance, such a removal is useful unto that end, it is equal it should be allowed. Cases of this nature may arise from the consideration of persons, places,

times, and many other circumstances that I cannot insist on in particular. But that such removals may be without offence, it is required that they be made, (1.) With the free consent of the churches concerned. (2.) With the advice of other churches, or their elders, with whom they walk in communion. And of examples of this kind, or of the removal of bishops or pastors from one church to another in an orderly manner, by advice and counsel for the good of the whole church, there are many instances in the primitive times. Such was that of Gregory Nazianzen removed from Casima to Constantinople, though I acknowledge it had no good success.

3. May a pastor voluntarily, or of his own accord, resign and lay down his office, and remain in a private capacity?

This also was judged inconvenient, if not unlawful, by the first synod of Ephesus, in the case of Eustathius. He was, as it appears, an aged man, one that loved his own peace and quietness, and who could not well bear the oppositions and reproaches which he met withal from the church or some in it; and thereon, solemnly upon his own judgment, without advice, laid down and renounced his office in the church, who thereupon chose a good man in his room. Yet did the synod condemn this practice, and that not without weighty reasons, whereby they confirmed their judgment.

But yet no general rule can be established in this case; nor was the judgment or practice of the primitive church precise herein. Clemens, in his epistle to the church of Corinth, expressly adviseth those on whose occasion there was disturbance and divisions in the church, to lay down their office and withdraw from it. Gregory Nazianzen did the same at Constantinople, and protesteth openly, that although he were himself innocent and free from blame, as he truly was, and one of the greatest men of his age, yet he would depart or be cast out, rather than they should not have peace among them; which he did accordingly, Orat. 52. et vit. Nazian. And afterward a synod at Constantinople under Photius, concluded that in some cases it is lawful, Can. 5. Wherefore,

1. It seems not to be lawful so to do merely on the account of weakness of work and labour, though occasioned by age, sickness, or bodily distempers. For no man is any

way obliged to do more than he is able, with the regular preservation of his life; and the church is obliged to be satisfied with the conscientious discharge of what abilities a pastor hath; otherwise providing for itself in what is wanting.

2. It is not lawful, merely on a weariness of, and despondency under, opposition and reproaches; which a pastor is called and obliged to undergo for the good and edification of the flock, and not to faint in the warfare whereto he is called.

These two were the reasons of Eustathius at Perga, which were disallowed in the council at Ephesus. But,

3. It is lawful in such an incurable decay of intellectual abilities, as whereon a man can discharge no duty of the pastoral office unto the edification of the church.

4. It is lawful, in case of incurable divisions in the church constantly obstructing its edification, and which cannot be removed whilst such a one continues in his office, though he be no way the cause of them. This is the case wherein Clemens gives advice, and whereof Gregory gave an example in his own practice.

But this case and its determination will hold only where the divisions are incurable by any other ways and means. For if those who cause such divisions may be cast out of the church, or the church may withdraw communion from them; or if there be divisions in fixed parties and principles, opinions or practices, they may separate into distinct communion; in such cases this remedy, by the pastor's laying down his office, is not to be made use of; otherwise all things are to be done for edification.

5. It may be lawful, where the church is wholly negligent in its duty, and persists in that negligence after admonition, in providing, according to their abilities, for the outward necessity of their pastor and his family. But this case cannot be determined without the consideration of many particular circumstances.

6. Where all or many of these causes concur, so as that a man cannot cheerfully and comfortably go on in the discharge of his office, especially, if he be pressed in point of conscience through the church's noncompliance with their duty, with respect unto any of the institutions of Christ:

and if the edification of the church, which is at present obstructed, may be provided for in their own judgment after a due manner; there is no such grievous yoke laid by the Lord Christ on the necks of any of his servants, but that such a person may peaceably lay down his office in such a church, and either abide in a private station, or take the care of another church, wherein he may discharge his office (being yet of ability) unto his own comfort, and their edification.

CHAP. VI.

Of the office of teachers in the church, or an inquiry into the state, condition, and work of those called teachers in the Scripture.

THE Lord Christ hath given unto his church pastors and teachers; Eph. iv. 11. He hath 'set in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers;' 1 Cor. xii. 28. In the church that was at Antioch there were prophets and teachers; Acts xiii. 1. And their work is both described and assigned unto them, as we shall see afterward.

But the thoughts of learned men, about those who in the Scripture are called teachers, are very various; nor is the determination of their state and condition easy or obvious, as we shall find in our inquiry.

If there were originally a distinct office of teachers in the church, it was lost for many ages: but yet there was always a shadow or appearance of it retained; first in public catechists, and then in doctors or professors of theology in the schools belonging unto any church. But this, as unto the title of doctor or teacher, is but a late invention. For the occasion of it rose about the year of Christ, 1135. Lotharius the emperor having found in Italy a copy of the Roman civil law, and being greatly taken with it, he ordained that it should be publicly read and expounded in the schools. This he began, by the direction of Imerius his chancellor, at Bononia; and to give encouragement unto this employment, they ordained, that those who were the public professors of it should be solemnly created doctors, of whom Bulgarus Hugolinus, with others, were the first. Not long after, this

rite of creating doctors was borrowed of the lawyers by divines, who publicly taught divinity in their schools. And this imitation first took place in Bononia, Paris, and Oxford. But this name is since grown a title of honour to sundry sorts of persons, whether unto any good use or purpose or no, I know not; but it is in use, and not worth contending about, especially if, as unto some of them, it be fairly reconcileable unto that of our Saviour, Matt. xxiii. 8.

But the custom of having in the church teachers that did publicly explain and vindicate the principles of religion, is far more ancient, and of known usage in the primitive churches. Such was the practice of the church of Alexandria in their school, wherein the famous Pantænus, Origen, and Clemens were teachers; an imitation whereof was continued in all ages of the church.

And indeed, the continuation of such a peculiar work and employment, to be discharged in manner of an office, is an evidence that originally there was such a distinct office in the church. For, although in the Roman church they had instituted sundry orders of sacred officers, borrowed from the Jews or Gentiles, which have no resemblance unto any thing mentioned in the Scripture; yet sundry things abased and corrupted by them in church-officers, took their occasional rise from what is so mentioned.

There are four opinions concerning those who are called by this name in the New Testament.

1. Some say, that no office at all is denoted by it; it being only a general appellation of those that taught others, whether constantly or occasionally. Such were the prophets in the church of Corinth, that spake occasionally and in their turns; 1 Cor. xiv. which is that which all might do who had ability for it, ver. 5. 24, 25.

2. Some say, it is only another name for the same office with that of a pastor, and so not to denote any distinct office; of which mind Jerom seems to be, Eph. iv.

3. Others allow, that it was a distinct office, whereunto some were called and set apart in the church, but it was only to teach (and that in a peculiar manner) the principles of religion, but had no interest in the rule of the church or the administration of the sacred mysteries; so the pastor in the church was to rule and teach, and administer the sa-

cred mysteries: the teacher to teach or instruct only, but not to rule, nor dispense the sacraments; and the ruling elder to rule only, and neither to preach nor administer sacraments; which hath the appearance of order, both useful and beautiful.

4. Some judge that it was a distinct office, but of the same nature and kind with that of the pastor, endowed with all the same powers, but differenced from it with respect unto gifts, and a peculiar kind of work allotted unto it: but this opinion hath this seeming disadvantage, that the difference between them is so small, as not to be sufficient to give a distinct denomination of officers, or to constitute a distinct office. And it may be, such a distinction in gifts will seldom appear, as that the church may be guided thereby in their choice of meet persons unto distinct offices. But Scripture testimony and rule must take place; and I shall briefly examine all these opinions.

1. The first is, that this is not the name of any officer, nor is a teacher, as such, any officer in the church; but it is used only as a general name for any that teach on any account the doctrine of the gospel. I do not indeed know of any who have in particular contended for this opinion; but I observe that very many expositors take no farther notice of them, but as such. This seems to me to be most remote from the truth.

It is true, that in the first churches not only some, but all who had received spiritual light in the gifts of knowledge and utterance, did teach and instruct others as they had opportunity; 1 Pet. v. 8—11. Hence, the heathen philosophers, as Celsus in particular, objected to the Christians of old, that they suffered suttlers, and weavers, and cobblers to teach among them, which, they who knew that Paul himself, their great apostle, wrought at a trade not much better, were not offended at. Of this sort were the disciples mentioned; Acts viii. 4. So was Aquila, Acts xviii. 26. and the many prophets in the church of Corinth; 2 Epist. i. 14. But,

1. The name διδάσκαλος, is not used in the New Testament but for a teacher with authority. The apostle John tells us, that διδάσκαλος is the same with ῥαββουνὶ, chap. xx. 16. or as it is written, ῥαββονὶ, Mark x. 51. which in

their mixed dialect was the same with rabbi. And רבא and רבי, רב, were then in use for the Hebrew מורה; of which see Job xxxvi. 22. Isa. xxx. 20. Now the constant signification of these words is, 'a master in teaching,' 'a teacher with authority.' Nor is διδάσκαλος used in the New Testament, but for such a one. And therefore those who are called teachers, were such as were set apart unto the office of teaching, and not such as were so called from an occasional work or duty.

2. Teachers are numbered among the officers, which Christ hath given unto and set in the church, Eph. iv. 11. 1 Cor. xii. 28. So that originally church-officers were intended by them, is beyond contradiction.

3. They are mentioned as those, who with others did preside in the church, and join in the public ministrations of it, Acts xv. 1, 2.

4. They are charged to attend unto the work of teaching, which none can be, but they whose office it is to teach, Rom. xii. 7. It is therefore undeniable, that there is such an office as that of a teacher mentioned in the Scripture.

The second opinion is, that although a teacher be a church-officer, yet no distinct office is intended in that denomination. It is, say they, only another name for a pastor, the office being one and the same, the same persons being both pastors and teachers, or called by these several names, as they have other titles also ascribed unto them.

So it is fallen out, and so it is usual in things of this nature, that men run into extremes: truth pleaseth them not. In the first deviation of the church from its primitive institution, there were introduced sundry offices in the church that were not of divine institution, borrowed partly of the Jews, and partly of the Gentiles, which issued in the seven orders of the church of Rome. They did not utterly reject any that were of a divine original, but retained some kind of figure, shadow, or image of them. But they brought in others that were merely of their own invention. In the rejection of this exorbitancy, some are apt to run into the other extreme. They will deny and reject some of them that have a divine warranty for their original. Howbeit, they are not many, nor burdensome: yea, they are all such, as without the continuation of them, the edification of the

church cannot be carried on in a due manner. For unto the beauty and order of the church in its rule and worship, it is required not only that there be many officers in each church, but also that they be of sundry sorts; all harmony in things natural, political, and ecclesiastical, arising from variety with proportion. And he that shall with calmness, and without prejudice, consider the whole work that is to be done in churches, with the end of their institution, will be able to understand the necessity of pastors, teachers, ruling-elders, and deacons, for those ends, and no other. And this I hope I shall demonstrate in the consideration of these respective offices, with the duties that belong unto them, as I have considered one of them already. Wherefore, as unto the opinion under present consideration, I say,

1. In the primitive church, about the end of the second century, before there was the least attempt to introduce new officers into the church, there were persons called unto the office and work of public teaching, who were not pastors, nor called unto the administration of other ordinances. Those of this sort, in the church of Alexandria, were, by reason of their extraordinary abilities, quickly of great fame and renown. Their constant work was publicly unto all comers, believers and unbelievers, to explain and teach the principles of Christian religion, defending and vindicating it from the opposition of its heathen adversaries, whether atheists or philosophers. This had never been so exactly practised in the church, if it had not derived from divine institution. And of this sort is the ὁ κατηχῶν, 'the catechist,' intended by the apostle, Gal. vi. 6. For it is such a one as constantly labours in the work of preaching, and hath those who depend upon his ministry therein, οἱ κατηχούμενοι, those that are taught or catechised by him. For, hence alone it is that maintenance is due unto him for his work. 'Let the catechised communicate unto the catechist,' the taught unto the teachers, 'in all good things.' And it is not the pastor of the church that he intends, for he speaks of him in the same case in another manner, and no where only with respect unto teaching alone.

2. There is a plain distinction between the offices of a pastor and a teacher, Eph. iv. 11. 'Some pastors and teachers:' this is one of the instances wherein men try their

wits, in putting in exceptions unto plain Scripture testimonies, as some or other do in all other cases; which if it may be allowed, we shall have nothing left us certain in the whole book of God. The apostle enumerates distinctly all the teaching officers of the church, both extraordinary and ordinary. It is granted, that there is a difference between apostles, prophets, and evangelists, but there is none, say some, between pastors and teachers; which are also named distinctly. Why so? Because there is an interposition of the article τοὺς between those of the former sort, and not 'between pastors and teachers;' a very weak consideration to control the evidence of the design of the apostle in the words. We are not to prescribe unto him how he shall express himself. But this I know, that the discretive and copulative conjunction καὶ, 'and,' between 'pastors and teachers,' doth no less distinguish them the one from the other, than the τοὺς μὲν and τοὺς δὲ before made use of. And this I shall confirm from the words themselves.

(1.) The apostle doth not say 'pastors or teachers,' which in congruity of speech should have been done, if the same persons and the same office were intended. And the discretive particle in the close of such an enumeration of things distinct, as that in this place, is of the same force with the other notes of distinction before used.

(2.) After he hath named pastors he nameth teachers with a note of distinction. This must contain either the addition of a new office, or be an interpretation of what went before; as if he had said pastors, that is, teachers. If it be the latter, then the name of teachers must be added, as that which was better known than that of pastors, and more expressive of the office intended. It is declared who are meant by pastors in calling them teachers; or else the addition of the word is merely superfluous. But this is quite otherwise; the name of pastor being more known as unto the indigitation of office-power and care, and more appropriated thereunto than that of teacher; which is both a common name, not absolutely appropriated unto office, and respective of one part of the pastoral office and duty only.

(3.) No instance can be given in any place where there is an enumeration of church-officers, either by their names, as 1 Cor. xii. 25. or by their work, as Rom. xii. 5—7. or by the

offices themselves, as Phil. i. 1. of the same officer, at the same time to be expressed under various names, which indeed must needs introduce confusion into such an enumeration. It is true, the same officers are in the Scripture called by several names, as pastors, bishops, presbyters; but if it had been said any where, that there were in the church bishops and presbyters, it must be acknowledged that they were distinct officers, as bishops and deacons are; Phil. i. 1.

(4.) The words, in their first notion, are not synonymous; for all pastors are teachers, but all teachers are not pastors; and therefore the latter cannot be exegetical of the former.

3. As these teachers are so called and named in contradistinction unto pastors in the same place, so they have distinct office-works and duties assigned unto them in the same place also; Rom. xii. 18. 'He that teacheth on teaching, he that exhorteth on exhortation.' If they have especial works to attend unto distinctly, by virtue of their offices, then are their offices distinctly also; for from one there is an especial obligation unto one sort of duties, and to another sort from the other.

4. These teachers are set in the church as in a distinct office from that of prophets; Secondarily, Prophets; Thirdly, Teachers, 1 Cor. xii. 28. And so they are mentioned distinctly in the church of Antioch, Acts xiii. 1. 'There were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers.' But in both places pastors are comprised under the name of prophets; exhortation being an especial branch of prophesy; Rom. xii. 6—8.

5. There is a peculiar institution of maintenance for these teachers, which argues a distinct office; Gal. vi. 6.

From all these considerations, it appears, that the teachers mentioned in the Scripture, were officers in the church distinct from pastors. For they are distinguished from them, (1.) By their name, declarative of the especial nature of their office. (2.) By their peculiar work, which they are to attend unto, in teaching by virtue of office. (3.) By the distinct placing in the church, as peculiar officers in it, distinct from prophets or pastors. (4.) By the especial constitution of their necessary maintenance. (5.) By the necessity of their work to be distinctly carried on in the church. Which may suffice for the removal of the second opinion.

The third is, that teachers are a distinct office in the church, but such whose office, work, and power, is confined unto teaching only, so as that they have no interest in rule or the administration of the sacraments. And,

1. I acknowledge that this seems to have been the way and practice of the churches after the apostles; for they had ordinary catechists and teachers in assemblies like schools, that were not called unto the whole work of the ministry.

2. The name of a teacher, neither in its native signification, nor in its ordinary application, as expressive of the work of this office, doth extend itself beyond, or signify any thing but, the mere power and duty of teaching. It is otherwise as unto the names of pastors, bishops, or overseers, elders, which, as unto the two former, their constant use in the Scripture suited unto their signification, includes the whole work of the ministry; and the latter is a name of dignity and rule. Upon the proposal of church-officers under these names, the whole of office-power and duty is apprehended as included in them. But the name of a teacher, especially as significant of that of rabbi among the Jews, carries along with it a confinement unto an especial work or duty.

3. I do judge it lawful for any church, from the nature of the thing itself, Scripture, general rules and directions, to choose, call, and set apart meet persons unto the office, work, and duty of teachers, without an interest in the rule of the church, or the administration of the holy ordinances of worship. The same thing is practised by many for the substance of it, though not in due order. And, it may be, the practice hereof, duly observed, would lead us unto the original institution of this office. But,

4. Whereas a teacher, merely as such, hath no right unto rule or the administration of ordinances, no more than the doctors among the Jews had right to offer sacrifices in the temple; yet he who is called to be a teacher, may also at the same time be called to be an elder; and a teaching elder hath the power of all holy administrations committed to him.

5. But he that is called to be a teacher in a peculiar manner, although he be an elder also, is to attend peculiarly

unto that part of his work from whence he receiveth his denomination. And so I shall at present dismiss this third opinion unto farther consideration, if there be any occasion for it.

The fourth opinion I rather embrace than any of the other, namely, upon a supposition that a teacher is a distinct officer in the church, his office is of the same kind with that of the pastor, though distinguished from it as unto degrees, both materially and formally: for,

1. They are joined with pastors in the same order as their associates in office; Eph. iv. 1. So they are with prophets, and set in the church as they are; 1 Cor. xii. 28. Acts xiii. 1. (2.) They have a peculiar work of the same general nature with that of pastors assigned unto them; Rom. xii. 7. Being to teach or preach the gospel by virtue of office, they have the same office for substance with the pastors. (3.) They are said λειτουργῆσαι in the church; Acts xiii. 1. which compriseth all sacred administrations.

Wherefore, upon the consideration of all that is spoken in the Scripture concerning church teachers, with the various conjectures of all sorts of writers about them, I shall conclude my own thoughts in some few observations, and then inquire into the state of the church, with reference unto these pastors and teachers. And I say,

1. There may be teachers in a church called only unto the work of teaching, without any farther interest in rule or right unto the administration of the sacraments. Such they seem to be who are mentioned, Gal. vi. 6. They are there called peculiarly κατηχοῦντες, 'catechists;' and παιδαγωγοὶ, 1 Cor. iv. 15. 'instructors of those that are young' in the rudiments of religion. And such there were in the primitive churches; some whereof were eminent, famous, and useful. And this was very necessary in those days when the churches were great and numerous; for, whereas the whole rule of the church, and the administration of all ordinances in it, is originally committed unto the pastor, as belonging entirely unto his office; the discharge of it in all its parts, unto the edification of the church, especially when it is numerous, being impossible for any one man, or it may be more, in the same office where all are obliged unto an especial attendance on one part of it, namely, the word and prayer,

it pleased the Lord Christ to appoint such as in distinct offices should be associated with them, for the discharge of sundry parts of their duty. So were deacons ordained to take care of the poor, and the outward concerns of the church, without any interest in rule or right to teach. So were, as we shall prove, elders ordained to assist and help in rule, without any call to preach or administer the sacraments. And so were teachers appointed to instruct the church and others in the truth, who have no right to rule or the administration of other ordinances. And thus, although the whole duty of the edification of the church be still incumbent on the pastors, yet being supplied with assistance to all the parts of it, it may be comfortably discharged by them. And if this order were observed in all churches, not only many inconveniences would be prevented, but the order and edification of the church greatly promoted.

2. He who is peculiarly called to be a teacher, with reference unto a distinction from a pastor, may yet at the same time be called to be an elder also, that is, to be a teaching elder. And where there is in any officer a concurrence of both these, a right unto rule as an elder, and power to teach, or preach the gospel, there is the same office and office-power, for the substance of it, as there is in the pastor.

3. On the foregoing supposition there yet remains a distinction between the office of a pastor and teacher; which, as far as light may be taken from their names and distinct ascriptions unto them, consists materially in the different gifts which those to be called unto office have received, which the church in their call ought to have respect unto; and formally in the peculiar exercise of those gifts in the discharge of their office, according unto the assignation of their especial work unto them, which themselves are to attend unto.

Upon what hath been before discoursed concerning the office of pastors and teachers, it may be inquired, Whether there may be many of them in a particular church, or whether there ought only to be one of each sort? And I say,

1. Take teachers in the third sense, for those who are only so, and have no farther interest in office-power, and there is no doubt, but that there may be as many of them in any church as are necessary unto its edification; and

ought so to be. And a due observation of this institution would prevent the inconvenience of men's preaching constantly, who are in no office of the church. For although I do grant, that those who have once been regularly or solemnly set apart or ordained unto the ministry, have the right of constant preaching inherent in them, and the duty of it incumbent on them, though they may be separated from those churches wherein and unto whom they were peculiarly ordained; yet for men to give themselves up constantly unto the work of teaching by preaching the gospel, who never were set apart by the church thereunto, I know not that it can be justified.

2. If there be but one sort of elders mentioned in the Scripture, it is out of all question, that there may be many pastors in the same church. For there were many elders in every church; Acts iv. 22. xx. 28. Phil. i. 1. Tit. i. 5. But if there are sundry sorts of elders mentioned in the Scripture, as pastors, who peculiarly feed the flock, those teaching elders of whom we have spoken, and those rulers concerning whom we shall treat in the next place; then no determination of this inquiry can be taken from the multiplication of them in any church.

3. It is certain that the order very early observed in the church, was one pastor, ὁ προέστως, 'præses,' quickly called 'episcopus' by way of distinction, with many elders assisting in rule and teaching, and deacons ministering in the things of this life, whereby the order of the church was preserved, and its authority represented. Yet I will not deny, but that in each particular church there may be many pastors with an equality of power, if the edification of the church doth require it.

4. It was the alteration of the state of the church from its primitive constitution, and deviation from its first order, by an occasional coalescency of many churches into one, by a new form of churches never appointed by Christ, which came not in until after the end of the second century, that gave occasion to corrupt this order into an episcopal preeminence, which degenerated more and more into confusion under the name of order. And the absolute equality of many pastors in one and the same church is liable unto many inconveniences, if not diligently watched against.

5. Wherefore, let the state of the church be preserved and kept unto its original constitution, which is congregational, and no other; and I do judge, that the order of the officers, which was so early in the primitive church, namely, of one pastor or bishop in one church, assisted in rule and all holy administrations with many elders teaching or ruling only, doth not so overthrow church-order, as to render its rule or discipline useless.

6. But whereas there is no difference in the Scripture, as unto office or power, intimated between bishops and presbyters, as we have proved, where there are many teaching elders in any church, an equality in office and power is to be preserved. But yet this takes not off from the due preference of the pastoral office, nor from the necessity of precedency for the observation of order in all church assemblies, nor from the consideration of the peculiar advantages, which gifts, age, abilities, prudence, and experience, which may belong unto some, according to rule may give.

CHAP. VII.

Of the rule of the church; or, of ruling elders.

1. The rule and government of the church, or the execution of the authority of Christ therein, is in the hand of the elders. All elders in office have rule; and none have rule in the church but elders: as such, rule doth belong unto them. The apostles, by virtue of their especial office, were intrusted with all church-power; but therefore they were elders also; 1 Pet. v. 1. 2 John i. 3 John i. See Acts xxi. 17. 1 Tim. v. 17. They are some of them, on other accounts, called bishops, pastors, teachers, ministers, guides, but what belongs unto any of them in point of rule, or what interest they have therein, it belongs unto them as elders, and not otherwise; Acts xx. 17. 28.

So under the Old Testament, where the word doth not signify a difference in age, but is used in a moral sense, elders are the same with rulers or governors, whether in offices civil or ecclesiastical; especially the rulers of the church

were constantly called its elders. And the use of the word, with the abuse of the power or office intended by it, is traduced to signify men in authority ('signiores, eldermani') in all places.

2. Church-power acted in its rule, is called the keys of the kingdom of heaven, by an expression derived from the keys that were a sign of office-power in the families of kings, Isa. xxii. 22. and used by our Saviour himself to denote the communication of church-power unto others, which was absolutely and universally vested in himself under the name of the 'key of David;' Rev. iii. 7. Matt. xvi. 19.

3. These keys are usually referred unto two heads, namely, the one of order, the other of jurisdiction.

4. By the key of order, the spiritual right, power, and authority of bishops or pastors to preach the word, to administer the sacraments, doctrinally to bind and loose the consciences of men, are intended.

5. By jurisdiction, the rule, government, or discipline of the church is designed, though it was never so called or esteemed in the Scripture or the primitive church, until the whole nature of church-rule or discipline was depraved and changed. Therefore, neither the word, nor any thing that is signified by it, or which it is applied unto, ought to be admitted unto any consideration in the things that belong unto the church or its rule; it being expressive of, and directing unto, that corrupt administration of things ecclesiastical, according unto the canon law, by which all church-rule and order is destroyed. I do therefore at once dismiss all disputes about it, as of things foreign to the gospel and Christian religion, I mean as unto the institutions of Christ in his church. The civil jurisdiction of supreme magistrates about the externals of religion, is of another consideration. But that these keys do include the twofold distinct powers of teaching and rule, of doctrine and discipline, is freely granted.

6. In the church of England (as in that of Rome), there is a peculiar distribution made of these keys. Unto some, that is, unto one special sort or order of men, they are both granted, both the key of order and of jurisdiction; which is unto diocesan bishops, with some others under various canonical restrictions and limitations, as deans and archdeacons.

Unto some is granted the key of order only, without the least interest in jurisdiction or rule by virtue of their office; which are the parochial ministers, or mere presbyters, without any additional title or power, as of commissary surrogates, or the like. And unto a third sort, there is granted the key of rule or jurisdiction almost plenipotent, who have no share in the key of order, that is, were never ordained, separated, dedicated unto any office in the church; such as are the chancellors, &c.

7. These chancellors are the only lay elders that I know any where in any church; that is, persons intrusted with the rule of the church, and the disposition of its censures, who are not ordained unto any church-office; but in all other things continue in the order of the laity or the people. All church rulers, by institution, are elders. To be an elder of the church, and a ruler in it, is all one. Wherefore, these persons being rulers in the church, and yet thus continuing in the order of the people, are lay-elders; whom I wonder how so many of the church came so seriously to oppose, seeing this order of men is owned by none but themselves. The truth is, and it must be acknowledged, that there is no known church in the world (I mean whose order is known unto us, and is of any public consideration), but they do dispose the rule of the church, in part, into the hands of persons who have not the power of authoritative preaching of the word, and administration of the sacraments committed unto them. For even those who place the whole external rule of the church in the civil magistrate, do it, as they judge him an officer of the church, intrusted by Christ with church-power. And those who deny any such officers as are usually called ruling elders in the reformed churches to be of divine institution, yet maintain that it is very necessary that there should be such officers in the church, either appointed by the magistrate, or chosen by the people, and that with cogent arguments. See Grot. de Jure Potestat. cap.

8. But this distribution mentioned of church-power, is unscriptural; nor is there any footsteps of it in antiquity. It is so as unto the two latter branches of it. That any one should have the power of order to preach the word, to administer the seals, to bind and loose the conscience doctrinally; or ministerially to bind and loose in the court of conscience,

and yet by the virtue of that office which gives them this power, not to have a right and power of rule or discipline to bind and loose in the court of the church, is that which neither the Scripture, nor any example of the primitive church, doth give countenance unto. And as by this means, those are abridged and deprived of their power, to whom it is granted by the institution and law of Christ, as it is with all elders duly called unto their office; so in the third branch there is a grant of church-power unto such as, by the law of Christ, are excluded from any interest therein. The enormity of which constitution I shall not at present insist upon. But inquiry must be made what the Scripture directs unto herein. And,

1. There is a work and duty of rule in the church, distinct from the work and duty of pastoral feeding, by the preaching of the word and administration of the sacraments. All agree herein, unless it be Erasmus and those that follow him, who seem to oppose it. But their arguments lie not against rule in general, which were brutish, but only a rule by external jurisdiction in the elders of the church. So they grant the general assertion of the necessity of rule, for who can deny it? only they contend about the subject of power required thereunto. A spiritual rule, by virtue of mutual voluntary confederation, for the preservation of peace, purity, and order in the church, few of that opinion deny; at least it is not that which they do oppose. For to deny all rule and discipline in the church, with all administration of censures in the exercise of a spiritual power internally inherent in the church, is to deny the church to be a spiritual political society, overthrow its nature, and frustrate its institution in direct opposition unto the Scripture. That there is such a rule in the Christian church, see Acts xx. 28. Rom. xii. 8. 1 Cor. xii. 28. 1 Tim. iii. 5. v. 17. Heb. xiii. 7. 17. Rev. ii. 3.

2. Different and distinct gifts are required unto the discharge of these distinct works and duties. This belongs unto the harmony of the dispensation of the gospel. Gifts are bestowed to answer all duties prescribed. Hence they are the first foundation of all power, work, and duty in the church; 'Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ;' that is, ability for duty,

according to the measure wherein Christ is pleased to grant it; Eph. iv. 7. 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal;' 1 Cor. xii. 4. 7—10. 'Having then gifts differing according to the grace given unto us,' &c. Rom. xii. 6—8. 'Wherefore, as every man hath received the gift, so are they to minister the same, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God;' 1 Pet. iv. 10. Hence are they called the 'powers of the world to come;' Heb. vi. 4, 5. Wherefore, differing gifts are the first foundation of differing offices and duties.

3. That differing gifts are required unto the different works of pastoral teaching on the one hand, and practical rule on the other, is evident, (1.) From the light of reason, and the nature of the works themselves being so different. And, (2.) From experience: some men are fitted by gifts for the dispensation of the word and doctrine in a way of pastoral feeding, who have no useful ability in the work of rule; and some are fitted for rule, who have no gifts for the discharge of the pastoral work in preaching. Yea, it is very seldom that both these sorts of gifts do concur in any eminency in the same persons, or without some notable defect. Those who are ready to assume all things unto themselves, are for the most part fit for nothing at all. And hence it is, that most of those who esteem both these works to belong principally unto them, do almost totally decline the one, or that of pastoral preaching, under a pretence of attending unto the other, that is, rule, in a very preposterous way; for they omit that which is incomparably the greater and more worthy, for that which is less and inferior unto it, although it should be attended unto in a due manner.

But this, and sundry other things of the like nature, proceed from the corruption of that traditional notion, which is true in itself and continued among all sorts of Christians; namely, that there ought to be some on whom the rule of the church is in an especial manner incumbent, and whose principal work it is to attend thereunto. For the great depravations of all church-government proceed from the corruption and abuse of this notion, which in itself and its original, is true and sacred. Herein also, 'Malum habitat in alieno fundo;' there is no corruption in church-order or rule, but

is corruptly derived from, or is set up as an image of some divine institution.

4. The work of rule, as distinct from teaching, is in general to watch over the walking or conversation of the members of the church with authority; exhorting, comforting, admonishing, reproving, encouraging, directing of them, as occasion shall require. The gifts necessary hereunto, are diligence, wisdom, courage, and gravity, as we shall see afterward. The pastoral work is, principally to 'reveal the whole counsel of God,' 'to divide the word aright,' or 'to labour in the word and doctrine,' both as unto the general dispensation, and particular application of it, in all seasons, and on all occasions.

Hereunto spiritual wisdom, knowledge, sound judgment, experience, and utterance are required, all to be improved by continual study of the word and prayer. But this difference of gifts, unto these distinct works, doth not of itself constitute distinct offices, because the same persons may be meetly furnished with those of both sorts.

5. Yet distinct works and duties, though some were furnished with gifts for both, was a ground in the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, for distinct offices in the church, where one sort of them were as much as those of one office could ordinarily attend unto; Acts vi. 2—4. Ministration unto the poor of the church, for the supply of their temporal necessities, is an ordinance of Christ. The administration hereof, the apostles were furnished for with gifts and wisdom above all others; but yet, because there was another part of their work and duty superior hereunto, and of greater necessity unto the propagation of the gospel and edification of the church, namely, a diligent attendance unto the word and prayer, the wisdom of the Holy Ghost in them thought meet to erect a new office in the church, for the discharge of that part of the ministerial duty which was to be attended unto; yet not so as to be any obstruction unto the other. I do not observe this, as if it were lawful for any others after them to do the same; namely, upon a supposition of an especial work, to erect an especial office. Only I would demonstrate from hence, the equity and reasonable ground of that institution, which we shall afterward evince.

6. The work of the ministry in prayer, and preaching of

the word, or labour in the word and doctrine, whereunto the administration of the seals of the covenant is annexed, with all the duties that belong unto the especial application of these things before insisted on, unto the flock; are ordinarily sufficient to take up the whole man, and the utmost of their endowments who are called unto the pastoral office in the church. The very nature of the work in itself is such, as that the apostle giving a short description of it, adds as an intimation of its greatness and excellency, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' 2 Cor. ii. 16. And the manner of its performance adds unto its weight. For not to mention that intension of mind in the exercise of faith, love, zeal, and compassion, which is required of them in the discharge of their whole office; the diligent consideration of the state of the flock, so as to provide spiritual food convenient for them; with a constant attendance unto the issues and effects of the word in the consciences and lives of men; is enough for the most part to take up their whole time and strength.

It is gross ignorance or negligence that occasioneth any to be otherwise minded. As the work of the ministry is generally discharged, as consisting only in a weekly provision of sermons, and the performance of some stated offices by reading, men may have time and liberty enough to attend unto other occasions. But in such persons we are not at present concerned. Our rule is plain; 1 Tim. iv. 12—16.

7. It doth not hence follow, that those who are called unto the ministry of the word, as pastors and teachers, who are elders also, are divested of the right of rule in the church, or discharged from the exercise of it, because others not called unto their office, are appointed to be assistant unto them; that is, helps in the government. For the right and duty of rule is inseparable from the office of elders, which all bishops or pastors are. The right is still in them, and the exercise of it consistent with their more excellent work, is required of them. So was it in the first institution of the sanhedrim in the church of Israel; Exod. xviii. 17—23. Moses had before the sole rule and government of the people. In the addition that was made of an eldership for his assistance, there was no diminution of his right, or the exercise of it according to his precedent power. And the apostles, in the constitution of elders in every church, derogated nothing from

their own authority, nor discharged themselves of their care. So when they appointed deacons to take care of supplies for the poor, they did not forego their own right, nor the exercise of their duty as their other work would permit them; Gal. ii. 9, 10. And in particular, the apostle Paul manifested his concernment herein, in the care he took about collection for the poor in all churches.

8. As we observed at the entrance of this chapter, the whole work of the church, as unto authoritative teaching and rule, is committed unto the elders. For authoritative teaching and ruling is teaching and ruling by virtue of office: and this office whereunto they do belong, is that of elders, as it is undeniably attested, Acts xx. 17, &c. All that belongs unto the care, inspection, oversight, rule, and instruction of the church, is committed unto the elders of it expressly. For elders is a name derived from the Jews, denoting them that have authority in the church. The first signification of the word in all languages respects age. Elders are old men well stricken in years; unto whom respect and reverence is due by the law of nature and Scripture command; unless they forfeit their privilege by levity or wickedness, which they often do. Now ancient men were originally judged, if not only, yet the most meet for rule, and were before others constantly called thereunto. Hence the name of elders was appropriated unto them who did preside and rule over others in any kind.

Only it may be observed, that there is in the Scripture no mention of rulers that are called elders, but such as are in a subordinate power and authority only. Those who were in supreme absolute power, as kings and princes, are never called elders. But elders by office were such only as had ministerial power under others. Wherefore, the highest officers in the Christian church being called elders, even the apostles themselves, and Peter in particular; 1 Epist. v. 1, 2. it is evident that they have only a ministerial power; and so it is declared, ver. 4. The pope would now scarce take it well to be esteemed only an elder of the church of Rome; unless it be in the same sense wherein the Turkish monarch is called the Grand Signior. But those who would be in the church above elders, have no office in it, whatever usurpation they may make over it.

9. To the complete constitution of any particular church, or the perfection of its organical state, it is required that there be many elders in it; at least more than one. In this proposition lies the next foundation of the truth which we plead for, and therefore it must be distinctly considered. I do not determine what their number ought to be; nor is it determinable, as unto all churches. For the light of nature sufficiently directs, that it is to be proportioned unto the work and end designed. Where a church is numerous, there is a necessity of increasing their number proportionable unto their work. In the days of Cyprian there was in the church of Carthage ten or twelve of them that are mentioned by name; and at the same time, there were a great many in the church of Rome under Cornelius. Where the churches are small, the number of elders may be so also. For no office is appointed in the church for pomp or show, but for labour only. And so many are necessary in each office as are able to discharge the work which is allotted unto them. But that church, be it small or great, is not complete in its state, is defective, which hath not more elders than one; who have not so many as are sufficient for their work.

10. The government of the church, in the judgment and practice of some, is absolutely democratical or popular. They judge that all church-power or authority, is seated and settled in the community of the brethren or body of the people. And they look on elders or ministers only as servants of the church; not only materially in the duties they perform, and finally for their edification, serving for the good of the church, in the things of the church; but formally also, as acting the authority of the church by a mere delegation, and not any of their own received directly from Christ, by virtue of his law and institution. Hence, they do occasionally appoint persons among themselves, not called unto, not vested with any office, to administer the supper of the Lord, or any other solemn offices of worship. On this principle and supposition, I see no necessity of any elders at all, though usually they do confer this office on some with solemnity. But as among them there is no direct necessity of any elders for rule, so we treat not at present concerning them.

11. Some place the government of many particular

churches in a diocesan bishop, with those that act under him, and by his authority, according unto the rule of the canon law, and the civil constitution of the land. These are so far from judging it necessary that there should be many elders for rule in every particular church, as that they allow no rule in them at all, but only assert a rule over them. But a church, where there is no rule in itself, to be exercised in the name of Christ by its own rulers, officers, guides, immediately presiding in it, is unknown to Scripture and antiquity. Wherefore, with these we deal not in this discourse; nor have any apprehension, that the power of presenting men, for any pretended disorder, unto the bishop's or chancellor's court, is any part of church-power or rule.

12. Others place the rule of particular churches, especially in cases of greatest moment, in an association, conjunction, or combination of all the elders of them in one society, which is commonly called a classis. So in all acts of rule, there will be a conjunct acting of many elders. And, no doubt, it is the best provision that can be made on a supposition of the continuance of the present parochial distribution. But those also of this judgment, who have most weighed and considered the nature of these things, do assert the necessity of many elders in every particular church, which is the common judgment and practice of the reformed churches in all places.

13. And some there are, who begin to maintain, that there is no need of any more but one pastor, bishop, or elder, in a particular church, which hath its rule in itself; other elders for rule being unnecessary. This is a novel opinion, contradictory to the sense and practice of the church in all ages. And I shall prove the contrary.

1. The pattern of the first churches constituted by the apostles, which it is our duty to imitate and follow as our rule, constantly expresseth and declares, that many elders were appointed by them in every church; Acts xi. 30. xiv. 23. xv. 2. 4. 6. 22. xvi. 4. xx. 17, &c. 1 Tim. v. 17. Phil. i. 1. Tit. i. 5. 1 Pet. v. 1. There is no mention in the Scripture, no mention in antiquity, of any church wherein there was not more elders than one, nor doth that church answer the original pattern where it is otherwise.

2. Where there is but one elder in a church, there can-

not be an eldership or presbytery; as there cannot be a senate where there is but one senator; which is contrary unto 1 Tim. iv. 14.

3. The continuation of every church in its original state and constitution, is, since the ceasing of extraordinary offices and powers, committed to the care and power of the church itself. Hereunto the calling and ordaining of ordinary officers, pastors, rulers, elders, teachers, doth belong. And therein, as we have proved, both the election of the people, submitting themselves unto them in the Lord, and the solemn setting of them apart by imposition of hands, do concur. But if there be but one elder only in a church, upon his death or removal, this imposition of hands must either be left unto the people, or be supplied by elders of other churches; or be wholly omitted, all which are irregular. And that church-order is defective, which wants the symbol of authoritative ordination.

4. It is difficult, if not impossible, on a supposition of one elder only in a church, to preserve the rule of the church from being prelatical or popular There is nothing more frequently objected unto those who dissent from diocesan bishops, than that they would every one be bishops in their own parishes, and unto their own people. All such pretences are excluded on our principles, of the liberty of the people, of the necessity of many elders in the same church in an equality of power, and the communion of other churches in association: but practically where there is but one elder, one of the extremes can be hardly avoided. If he rule by himself, without the previous advice in some cases, as well as the subsequent consent of the church, it hath an eye of unwarrantable prelacy in it: if every thing be to be originally transacted, disposed, ordered by the whole society, the authority of the elder will quickly be insignificant, and he will be little more in point of rule, than any other brother of the society. But all these inconveniences are prevented by the fixing of many elders in each church, which may maintain the authority of the presbytery, and free the church from the despotical rule of any Diotrephes. But in case there be but one in any church, unless he have wisdom to maintain the authority of the eldership in his own person and actings, there is no rule but confusion.

5. The nature of the work whereunto they are called, requires, that in every church consisting in any considerable number of members, there should be more elders than one. When God first appointed rule in the church under the Old Testament, he assigned unto every ten persons, or families, a distinct ruler; Deut. i. 15. For the elders are to take care of the walk or conversation of all the members of the church, that it be according unto the rule of the gospel. This rule is eminent as unto the holiness that it requires, above all other rules of moral conversation whatever. And there is in all the members of the church great accuracy and circumspection required in their walking after it and according unto it. The order also and decency which is required in all church assemblies, stands in need of exact care and inspection. That all these things can be attended unto, and discharged in a due manner in any church by one elder, is for them only to suppose who know nothing of them. And, although there may be an appearance for a season of all these things in such churches, yet there being not therein a due compliance with the wisdom and institution of Christ, they have no present beauty, nor will be of any long continuance.

These considerations, as also those that follow, may seem jejune and contemptible unto such as have another frame of church-rule and order drawn in their minds and interests. A government vested in some few persons, with titles of pre-eminence and legal power, exercised in courts with coercive jurisdiction, by the methods and processes of canons of their own framing, is that which they suppose doth better become the grandeur of church-rulers, and the state of the church, than these creeping elders with their congregations. But, whereas our present inquiry after these things is only in and out of the Scripture, wherein there is neither shadow nor appearance of any of these practices, I beg their pardon, if at present I consider them not.

9. We shall now make application of these things unto our present purpose. I say then, (1.) Whereas there is a work of rule in the church, distinct from that of pastoral feeding. (2.) Whereas this work is to be attended unto with diligence, which includes the whole duty of him that attends unto it. And, (3.) That the ministry of the word and prayer, with all those duties that accompany it, is a full employment

for any man, and so consequently his principal and proper work, which it is unlawful for him to be remiss in by attending on another with diligence. And, (4.) Whereas there ought to be many elders in every church, that both the works of teaching and ruling may be constantly attended unto. (5.) That in the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, distinct works did require distinct offices for their discharge; all which we have proved already: our inquiry hereon is, Whether the same Holy Spirit hath not distinguished this office of elders into those two sorts, namely, those who are called unto teaching and rule also; and those who are called unto rule only: which we affirm.

The testimonies whereby the truth of this assertion is confirmed, are generally known and pleaded: I shall insist on some of them only, beginning with that which is of uncontrollable evidence, if it had any thing to conflict withal but prejudices and interest; and this is 1 Tim. v. 17. *οἱ καλῶς προεστῶτες πρεσβύτεροι διπλῆς τιμῆς ἀξιούσθωσαν· μάλιστα οἱ κοπιῶντες ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ.* *Προΐστημι* or *προΐσταμαι*, is 'præsum, præsidio;' to preside, to rule. 'Præsident probati seniores.' Tertull. And the bishop or pastor in Justin Martyr, is *ὁ προέστως*. So is the word constantly used in the New Testament, Rom. xii. 8. *ὁ προϊστάμενος*, 'that ruleth;' 1 Thess. v. 12. *προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν*, 'that are over you,' that is, in place of rule; 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5. 12. It is applied unto family rule and government, as it is also unto care and diligence about good works, Tit. iii. 8. 14. *Προστασία* is the whole presidency in the church, with respect unto its rule. Translators agree in the reading of these words, so the Hebrew of Munster, וזקני-העדה אשר מיטיבים לנהג, 'The elders of the congregation who well discharge their rule or conduct.' So the Syriac, קשושא אילין, 'those elders.' 'Qui bene præsunt presbyteri,' Vul. Lat. 'Seniori che governano bene;' Ital. All agree that it is the governors and government of the church in general that is here intended. *Μάλιστα* is the word most controverted. All translators esteem it distinctive, Heb. ועלה, 'eminently;' Syr. יתיראית, 'chiefly, principally,' 'maxime.' *οἱ κοπιῶντες*, היוגעים, 'who labour painfully,' labour to weariness; travail in the word and doctrine.

The elders or presbyters in office, elders of the church that rule well, or discharge their presidency for rule in due

manner, are worthy, or ought to be reputed worthy, of double honour; especially those of them who labour, or are engaged in the great labour and travail of the word and doctrine.

And some things may be observed in general concerning these words.

1. This testimony relates directly unto the rules and principles before laid down, directing unto the practice of them. According unto the analogy of those principles, these words are to be interpreted. And unless they are overthrown, it is to no purpose to put in exceptions against the sense of this or that word; the interpretation of them is to be suited unto the analogy of the things which they relate unto. If we consider not what is spoken here in consent with other Scriptures treating of the same matter, we depart from all sober rules of interpretation.

2. On this supposition, the words of the text have a plain and obvious signification, which at first view presents itself unto the common sense and understanding of all men. And where there is nothing contrary unto any other divine testimony, or evident reason, such a sense is constantly to be embraced. There is nothing here of any spiritual mystery; but only a direction concerning outward order in the church. In such cases the literal sense of the words rationally apprehended, is all that we are concerned in. But on the first proposal of this text, 'that the elders that rule well, are worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine;' a rational man who is unprejudiced, who never heard of the controversy about ruling elders, can hardly avoid an apprehension that there are two sorts of elders, some that labour in the word and doctrine, and some who do not so do. The truth is, it was interest and prejudice that first caused some learned men to strain their wits to find out evasions from the evidence of this testimony: being so found out, some others of meaner abilities have been entangled by them. For there is not one new argument advanced in this cause, not one exception given in unto the sense of the place which we plead for, but what was long since coined by Papists and prelatists, and managed with better colours than some now are able to lay on them, who pretend unto the same judgment.

3. This is the substance of the truth in the text. There are elders in the church; there are or ought to be so in every church. With these elders the whole rule of the church is intrusted; all these, and only they, do rule in it. Of these elders there are two sorts, for a description is given of one sort distinctive from the other, and comparative with it. The first sort doth rule, and also labour in the word and doctrine. That these works are distinct and different was before declared. Yet, as distinct works, they are not incompatible, but are committed unto the same person. They are so unto them, who are not elders only, but moreover pastors or teachers. Unto pastors and teachers, as such, there belongs no rule; although, by the institution of Christ, the right of rule be inseparable from their office. For all that are rightfully called thereunto are elders also, which gives them an interest in rule. They are elders with the addition of pastoral or teaching authority. But there are elders which are not pastors or teachers. For there are some who rule well, but labour not in the word and doctrine; that is, who are not pastors or teachers.

Elders that rule well, but labour not in the word and doctrine, are ruling elders only; and such are in the text.

The most learned of our Protestant adversaries in this case, are Erastus, Bilson, Sarravia, Downham, Scultetus, Mead, Grotius, Hammond; who agree not at all among themselves about the sense of the words. For,

1. Their whole design and endeavour is to put in exceptions against the obvious sense and interpretation of the words, not fixing on any determinate exposition of it themselves, such as they will abide by in opposition unto any other sense of the place. Now this is a most sophistical way of arguing upon testimonies, and suited only to make controversies endless. Whose wit is so barren as not to be able to raise one exception or other against the plainest and most evident testimony? So the Socinians deal with us, in all the testimonies we produce to prove the deity or satisfaction of Christ. They suppose it enough to evade their force, if they can but pretend that the words are capable of another sense; although they will not abide by it, that this or that is their sense. For if they would do so, when that is overthrown, the truth would be established. But every

testimony of the Scripture hath one determinate sense. When this is contended about, it is equal that those at difference do express their apprehensions of the mind of the Holy Spirit in the word which they will abide by. When this is done, let it be examined and tried, whether of the two senses pretended unto, doth best comply with the signification and use of the words, the context or scope of the place, other Scripture testimonies, and the analogy of faith. No such rule is attended unto in this case by our adversaries. They think it enough to oppose our sense of the work, but will not fix upon any of their own, which if it be disproved, ours ought to take place. And hence,

2. They do not in the least agree among themselves, scarce any two of them, on what is the most probable sense of the words; nor are any of them, singly, well resolved what application to make of them, nor unto what persons; but only propose things as their conjecture. But of very many opinions or conjectures that are advanced in this case, all of them but of one, are accompanied with the modesty of granting that divers sorts of elders are here intended, which, without more than ordinary confidence, cannot be denied. But,

Some by elders that rule well, do understand bishops that are diocesans; and by those that labour in the word and doctrine, ordinary preaching presbyters; which plainly gives them the advantage of pre-eminence, reverence, and maintenance above the other.

Some by elders that rule well, understand ordinary bishops and presbyters; and by those that labour in the word and doctrine, evangelists; so carrying the text out of the present concernment of the church, deacons are esteemed by some to have an interest in the rule of the church, and so to be intended in the first place; and preaching ministers in the latter.

Some speak of two sorts of elders, both of the same order, or ministers; some that preach the word and administer the sacraments; and others that are employed about inferior offices, as reading, and the like, which is the conceit of Scultetus.

Mr. Mede weighs most of these conjectures, and at length prefers one of his own before them all; namely, that

by elders that rule well, civil magistrates are intended; and by those that labour in the word and doctrine, the ministers of the gospel.

But some, discerning the weakness and improbability of all these conjectures, and how easily they may be disproved, betake themselves unto a direct denial of that which seems to be plainly asserted in the text; namely, that there are two sorts of elders here intended and described, which they countenance themselves in, by exception unto the application of some terms in the text, which we shall immediately consider.

Grotius, as was before intimated, disputes against the divine institution of such temporary lay-elders as are made use of in sundry of the reformed churches. But when he hath done, he affirms, that it is highly necessary that such conjunct associates in rule from among the people, should be in every church; which he proves by sundry arguments. And these he would have either nominated by the magistrate, or chosen by the people.

Wherefore, omitting all contests about the forementioned conceits, or any other of the like nature, I shall propose one argument from these words, and vindicate it from the exceptions of those of the latter sort.

Preaching elders, although they rule well, are not worthy of double honour, unless they labour in the word and doctrine.

But there are elders who rule well that are worthy of double honour, though they do not labour in the word and doctrine.

Therefore, there are elders that rule well, who are not teaching or preaching elders, that is, who are ruling elders only.

The proposition is evident in its own light, from the very terms of it. For to preach is to labour in the word and doctrine; preaching or teaching elders, that do not labour in the word and doctrine, are preaching or teaching elders that do not preach or teach. And to say that preachers, whose office and duty is to preach, are worthy of that double honour which is due on the account of preaching, though they do not preach, is uncouth and irrational. It is contrary to the Scripture, and the light of nature, as implying

a contradiction, that a man whose office it is to teach and preach, should be esteemed worthy of double honour on the account of his office, who doth not as an officer teach or preach.

The assumption consists upon the matter, in the very words of the apostle. For he who says, 'The elders who rule well, are worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine,' saith there are, or may be elders who rule well, who do not labour in the word and doctrine, that is, who are not obliged so to do.

The argument from these words may be otherwise framed, but this contains the plain sense of this testimony.

Sundry things are excepted unto this testimony and our application of it. Those which are of any weight consist in a contest about two words in the text, μάλιστα and κοπιῶντες; some place their confidence of evasion in one of them, and some in another; the argument from both being inconsistent. If that sense of one of these words which is pleaded as a relief against this testimony be embraced, that which unto the same purpose is pretended to be the sense of the other, must be rejected. Such shifts doth an opposition unto the truth put men to.

1. Some say that μάλιστα, 'especially,' is not distinctive, but descriptive only; that is, it doth not distinguish one sort of elders from another; but only describes that single sort of them by an adjunct of their office, whereof the apostle speaks. The meaning of it, they say, is, as much as, seeing that. The elders that rule well are worthy of double honour; seeing that they also labour; or especially considering that they labour, &c.

That this is the sense of the word, that it is thus to be interpreted, must be proved from the authority of ancient translations, or the use of it in other places of the New Testament, or from its precise signification and application in other authors learned in this language; or that it is inforced from the context, or matter treated of.

But none of these can be pretended.

1. The rendering of the word in old translations we have before considered. They agree in 'maxime illi qui;' which is distinctive.

2. The use of it in other places of the New Testament is

constantly distinctive, whether applied to things or persons; Acts xx. 38. ὀδυνώμενοι μάλιστα ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ, 'Sorrowing chiefly at the word,' of seeing his face no more. Their sorrow herein was distinct from all their other trouble. Gal. vi. 10. 'Let us do good unto all;' μάλιστα δὲ πρὸς τοὺς οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως, 'but chiefly,' especially, 'unto the household of faith.' It puts a distinction between the household of faith and all others, by virtue of their especial privilege; which is the direct use of the word in that place of the same apostle, Phil. iv. 22. 'All the saints salute you;' μάλιστα δὲ οἱ ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας, 'especially they that are of Cæsar's house.' Two sorts of saints are plainly expressed; first, such as were so in general; such as were so also, but under this especial privilege and circumstance, that they were of Cæsar's house, which the others were not; as it is here with respect unto elders: all rule well, but some moreover labour in the word and doctrine. 1 Tim. v. 8. εἰ δέ τις τῶν ἰδίων, καὶ μάλιστα τῶν οἰκείων οὐ προνοεῖ. 'If a man provide not for his own, especial those of his own house;' especially children or servants, which live in his own house, and are thereby distinguished from others of a more remote relation. 2 Tim. iv. 13. 'Bring the books;' μάλιστα τὰς μεμβράνας, 'especially the parchments;' not because they are parchments; but among the books, the parchments in particular, and in an especial manner. 2 Pet. ii. 9, 10. 'The Lord knows how to reserve the wicked to the day of judgment to be punished;' μάλιστα δὲ τοὺς ὀπίσω σάρκος, &c. 'especially those that walk after the flesh;' who shall be singled out to exemplary punishment. It is but once more used in the New Testament; namely, Acts xxvi. 3. where it includes a distinction in the thing under consideration.

Whereas this is the constant use of the word in the Scripture (being principally used by this apostle in his writings), wherein it is distinctive and comparative of the things and persons that respect is had unto; it is to no purpose to pretend that it is here used in another sense, or is otherwise applied, unless they can prove from the context that there is a necessity of their peculiar interpretation of it.

3. The use of the word, in other authors, is concurrent with that of it in the Scripture, Herodian, lib. 2. φιλέορτοι δὲ φύσει Σύροι, μάλιστα δὲ τὸν Ἀντιοκείαν κατοικοῦντες, 'The

Syrians are naturally lovers of festivals; especially they that dwell at Antioch.' It is the same phrase of speech with that here used. For all they that dwelt at Antioch were Syrians; but all the Syrians dwelt not at Antioch. There is a distinction and distribution made of the Syrians into two sorts: such as were Syrians only, and such as being Syrians, dwelt at Antioch, the metropolis of the country. If a man should say, that all Englishmen were stout and courageous, especially the Londoners; he would both affirm the Londoners to be Englishmen, and distinguish them from the rest of their countrymen. So, all that labour in the word and doctrine, are elders; but all elders do not labour in the word and doctrine, nor is it their duty so to do; these we call ruling elders; and, as I judge, rightly.

4. The sense which the words will give being so interpreted, as that a distinction of elders is not made in them, is absurd; the subject and predicate of the proposition being terms convertible; it must be so, if the proposition be not allowed to have a distinction in it. One sort of elders only, it is said, are here intended. I ask who they are, and of what sort? It is said, the same with pastors and teachers, or ministers of the gospel. For if the one sort of elders intended, be of another sort, we obtain what we plead for, as fully as if two sorts were allowed. Who then are these elders, these pastors and teachers, these ministers of the church? Are they not those who labour in the word and doctrine? Yes, it will be said, it is they and no other. Then this is the sense of the words; Those who labour in the word and doctrine, that rule well, are worthy of double honour, especially if they labour in the word and doctrine. For if there be but one sort of elders, then elders, and those that labour in the word and doctrine, are terms convertible. But elders, and labour in the word and doctrine, are subject and predicate in this proposition.

Wherefore, there are few of any learning or judgment, that make use of this evasion; but allowing a distinction to be made, they say, that it is as to work and employment, and not as unto office. Those who in the discharge of their office as elders do so labour as is intended and included in the word κοπιῶντες, which denotes a peculiar kind of work in the ministry: yea, say some, this word denotes the work

of an evangelist, who was not confined unto any one place; but travelled up and down the world to preach the gospel. And those of this mind do allow, that two sorts of elders are intended in the words. Let us see whether they have any better success in this their conjecture, than the others have in the former answer.

1. I grant that κοπιᾶν, the word here used, signifies to labour with pains and diligence, 'ad ultimum virium, usque ad fatigationem;' unto the utmost of men's strength, and unto weariness. But,

2. So to labour in the word and doctrine, is the duty of all pastors and teachers; and whoever doth not so labour, is negligent in his office, and worthy of severe blame, instead of double honour. For,

1. Κόπος, whence is κοπιάω, is the labour of a minister; and so of any minister in his work of teaching and preaching the gospel; 1 Cor. iii. 8. ἕκαστος δὲ τὸν ἴδιον μισθὸν λήψεται κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον κόπον, 'Every one' (that is, every one employed in the ministry, whether to plant or to water; to convert men, or to edify the church) 'shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour.' He that doth not strive, κοπιᾶν, in the ministry, shall never receive a reward, κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον κόπον, according to his own labour; and so is not worthy of double honour.

2. It is a general word used to express the work of any, in the service of God; whereon it is applied unto the prophets and teachers under the Old Testament; John iv. 38. 'I sent you to reap that whereon you bestowed no labour;' ἄλλοι κεκοπιάκασι, καὶ ὑμεῖς εἰς τὸν κόπον αὐτῶν εἰσεληλύθατε, 'others have laboured, and you have entered into their labours:' that is, of the prophets and John the Baptist. Yea, it is so unto the labour that women may take in the serving of the church; Rom. xvi. 6. 'Salute Mary,' ἥτις πολλὰ ἐκοπίασε, 'who laboured much;' which is more than simply κοπιᾶν. Ver. 12. 'Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa,' τὰς κοπιώσας ἐν Κυρίῳ, 'who laboured in the Lord.' Ver. 13. 'Salute the beloved Persis,' ἥτις πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν ἐν Κυρίῳ, 'who laboured much in the Lord.' So wide from truth is it, that this word should signify a labour peculiar to some sorts of ministers, which all are not in common obliged unto.

3. If the labour of evangelists, or of them who travelled

up and down to preach the word be intended, then it is so, either because this is the proper signification of the word, or because it is constantly used elsewhere to express that kind of labour. But the contrary unto both of these is evident from all places wherein it is used. So is it expressly applied to fixed elders, 1 Thess. v. 12. 'We exhort you, brethren, to know,' τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν, 'them that labour among you;' who are the rulers and instructors.

It is therefore evident, that this word expresseth no more but what is the ordinary indispensable duty of every teaching elder, pastor, or minister. And if it be so, then those elders, that is, pastors or teachers, that do not perform and discharge it, are not worthy of double honour. Nor would the apostle give any countenance unto them, who were any way remiss or negligent, in comparison of others, in the discharge of their duty; see 1 Thess. v. 12.

There are therefore two sorts of duties confessedly here mentioned and commanded; the first is, ruling well; the other, labouring in the word and doctrine. Suppose that both these, ruling and teaching, are committed to one sort of persons only, having one and the same office absolutely, then are some commended who do not discharge their whole duty, at least not comparatively unto others; which is a vain imagination. That both of them are committed unto one sort of elders, and one of them only unto another, each discharging its duty with respect unto its work, and so both worthy of honour, is the mind of the apostle.

That which is objected from the following verse, namely, that maintenance belongs unto this double honour, and so, consequently, that if there be elders that are employed in the work of rule only, that maintenance is due unto them from the church; I answer, it is so no doubt; if, (1.) The church be able to make them an allowance. (2.) If their work be such as to take up the whole or the greatest part of their industry; and, (3.) If they stand in need of it: without which considerations, it may be dispensed withal; not only in them, but in teaching elders also.

Our next testimony is from the same apostle, Rom. xii. 6—8. 'Having then gifts differing according unto the grace given unto us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according

to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministry; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorts, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.'

Our argument from hence is this: There is in the church ὁ προϊστάμενος 'one that ruleth;' προΐστημι is 'to rule with authority by virtue of office,' whence is προέστως, and προϊστάμενος, one that presides over others with authority. For the discharge of their office, there is χάρισμα διάφορον, a 'differing peculiar gift' bestowed on some; ἔχοντες χαρίσματα διάφορα, ver. 6. and there is the especial manner prescribed for the discharge of this especial office, by virtue of that especial gift; ἐν σπουδῇ, it is to be done with peculiar diligence. And this ruler is distinguished from him that exhorteth, and him that teacheth, with whose especial work, as such, he hath nothing to do; even as they are distinguished from those who give and shew mercy. That is, there is an elder by office in the church, whose work and duty it is to rule, not to exhort or teach ministerially, which is our ruling elder.

It is answered, that the apostle doth not treat in this place of offices, functions, or distinct officers; but of differing gifts, in all the members of the church, which they are to exercise according as their different nature doth require.

Sundry things I shall return hereunto, which will both explain the context, and vindicate our argument.

1. Those with whom we have to do principally, allow no exercise of spiritual gifts in the church, but by virtue of office. Wherefore, a distinct exercise of them is here placed in distinct officers; one, as we shall see, being expressly distinguished from another.

2. Give such a probable enumeration of the distinct offices in the church, which they assert, namely, of archbishops, bishops, presbyters, and chancellors, &c. and we shall yield the cause.

3. Gifts alone do no more, give no other warranty nor authority, but only render men meet for their exercise, as they are called, and as occasion doth require. If a man hath received a gift of teaching, but is not called to office, he is

not obliged, nor warranted thereby, to attend on public teaching, nor is it required of him in a way of duty, nor given in charge unto him, as here it is.

4. There is in one, rule required with diligence. He is ὁ προϊστάμενος, a 'ruler;' and it is required of him that he attend unto his work with diligence. And there are but two things required unto the confirmation of our thesis. (1.) That this rule is an act of office-power. (2.) That he unto whom it is ascribed, is distinguished from them unto whom the pastoral and other offices in the church are committed.

For the first, it is evident that rule is an act of office or of office-power: for it requires, (1.) An especial relation; there is so between him that ruleth, and them that are ruled; and this is the relation of office, or all confusion will ensue. (2.) Especial prelation. He that rules, is over, is above them that are ruled; 'Obey them that are over you in the Lord;' this in the church cannot be in any, but by virtue of office. (3.) Especial authority. All lawful rule is an act of authority; and there is no authority in the church, but by virtue of office. Secondly, That this officer is distinct from all others in the church we shall immediately demonstrate, when we have a little farther cleared the context. Wherefore,

5. It is confessed that respect is had unto gifts; having 'different gifts;' ver. 6, 7. As all office-power in the church is founded in them; Eph. iv. 7—9. 11, 12. But gifts, absolutely with reference unto common use, are not intended, as in some other places. But they are spoken of with respect unto offices or functions, and the communication of them unto officers, for the discharge of their office. This is evident from the text and context, with the whole design of the place. For,

1. The analysis of the place directs unto this interpretation. Three sorts of duties are prescribed unto the church in this chapter. (1.) Such as are universal, belonging absolutely unto all, and every one that appertains unto it; which are declared, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Such as are peculiar unto some, by virtue of that especial place which they have in the church; ver. 3—8. This can be nothing but office. (3.) Such as are general or common, with respect unto oc-

casions, from ver. 8. to the end of the chapter. Hence the same duty is doubly prescribed; to some in way of especial office, to others in the way of a gracious duty in general. So here, 'He that gives, let him do it with simplicity,' ver. 8. is the same duty or work for the substance of it, with 'distributing unto the necessity of the saints;' ver. 13. And the apostle doth not repeat his charge of the same duty in so few words, as required in the same manner, and of the same persons. But in the first place, he speaks of the manner of its performance, by virtue of office; and in the latter, of its discharge, as to the substance of it, as a grace in all believers. The design of the apostle lies plain in the analysis of this discourse.

2. The context makes the same truth evident. For,

(1.) The whole ordinary public work of the church is distributed into προφητεία, and διακονία; 'prophecy and ministry.' For the extraordinary gift of prophecy is not here intended; but only that of the interpretation of the Scripture, whose rule is the analogy of faith; εἴτε προφητείαν, κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως. It is such prophecy as is to be regulated by the Scripture itself; which gives the proportion of faith. And there is not any thing, in any or both of these, prophecy and ministry, but it belongs unto office in the church. Neither is there any thing belonging unto office in the church, but may be reduced unto one of these, as they are all of them here, by the apostle.

(2.) The gifts spoken of are, in general, referred unto all them who are intended. Now these are either the whole church, and all the members of it, or all the officers of the church only. Hence it is expressed in the plural number, ἔχοντες χαρίσματα, 'we having;' that is, all we that are concerned herein. This cannot be 'all of the church;' for all the church have not received the gifts of prophecy and ministry. Nor can any distinction be made of who doth receive them, and who doth not, but with respect unto office. And, therefore,

(3.) In the distribution which ensues of prophecy, into exhorting and teaching; and of ministry into shewing mercy, rule, and giving; having stated these gifts in general, in the officers in general, making distinct application of them

unto distinct officers, he speaks in the singular number, ὁ διδάσκων, ὁ παρακαλῶν, ὁ προϊστάμενος. 'He that teacheth, he that exhorteth, he that ruleth.'

6. It is then evident that offices are intended; and it is no less evident, that distinct offices are so, which was to be proved in the second place. For, (1.) The distributive particle εἴτε, and the indicative article ὁ, prefixed unto each office in particular, do shew them distinct, so far as words can do it. As by the particle εἴτε, 'whether,' they are distinguished in their nature; whether they be of this or that kind; so by the article prefixed to each of them in exercise, they are distinguished in their subjects. (2.) The operations, work, and effects ascribed unto these gifts, require distinct offices and functions in their exercise. And if the distribution be made unto all promiscuously without respect unto distinct offices, it were the only way to bring confusion into the church, whereas, indeed, here is an accurate order in all church administrations represented to us. And it is farther evident that distinct offices are intended. (1.) From the comparison made unto the members of the body; ver. 4. 'All the members have not the same office;' the eye hath one, the ear hath another. (2.) Each of the duties mentioned and given in charge, is sufficient for a distinct officer, as is declared Acts vi.

7. In particular, he that ruleth, is a distinct officer: an officer, because rule is an act of office, or office-power. And he is expressly distinguished from all others. But, say some, he that ruleth, is he that doth so, be who he will, that is the pastor or teacher, the teaching elder. But the contrary is evident. (1.) He that says, he that exhorteth, and then adds, he that ruleth, having distinguished before between prophecy, whereunto exhortation doth belong, and ministry whereof rule is a part; and prefixing the prepositive indicative article to each of them, doth as plainly put a difference between them, as can be done by words. (2.) Rule is the principal work of him that ruleth. For he is to attend unto it, ἐν σπουδῇ, with diligence, that is, such as is peculiar unto rule, in contradistinction unto what is principally required in other administrations. But rule is not the principal work of the pastor, requiring constant and continual attendance. For

his labour in the word and doctrine is ordinarily sufficient for the utmost of his diligence and abilities.

8. We have therefore in this context a beautiful order of things in and of the church. All the duties of it, with respect unto its edification, derived from distinct differing spiritual gifts, exercised in and by distinct officers, unto their peculiar ends. The distinction that is in the nature of those gifts, their use and end being provided for in distinct subjects. The mind of no one man, at least ordinarily, is meet to be the seat and subject of all those differing gifts in any eminent degree; the person of no man being sufficient, meet, or able to exercise them in a way of office towards the whole church; especially those who labour in the word and doctrine, being obliged to give themselves wholly thereunto, and those that rule, to attend thereto with diligence; so many distinct works, duties, and operations, with the qualifications required in their discharge, being inconsistent in the same subject; all things are here distributed into their proper order and tendency, unto the edification of the church. Every distinct gift required to be exercised in a peculiar manner, unto the public edification of the church, is distributed unto peculiar officers, unto whom an especial work is assigned to be discharged by virtue of the gifts received, unto the edification of the whole body. No man alive is able to fix on any thing which is necessary unto the edification of the church, that is not contained in these distributions, under some of the heads of them. Nor can any man find out anything in these assignations of distinct duties unto distinct offices, that is superfluous, redundant, or not directly necessary unto the edification of the whole, with all the parts and members of it; nor do I know any wise and sober man who knows any thing how the duties enjoined are to be performed, with what care, diligence, circumspection, prayer, and wisdom, suited unto the nature, ends, and objects of them, can ever imagine that they can all of them belong unto one and the same office, or be discharged by one and the same person.

Let men advance any other church-order in the room of that here declared; so suited unto the principles of natural light, operations, and duties of diverse natures, being distributed and assigned to such distinct gifts; acted in distinct offices, as

renders those unto whom they are prescribed meet and able for them; so correspondent to all institutions, rules, and examples of church-order in other places of Scripture; so suited unto the edification of the church, wherein nothing which is necessary thereunto is omitted, nor any thing added above what is necessary; and it shall be cheerfully embraced.

The truth is, the ground of the different interpretations and application of this context of the apostle, ariseth merely from the prejudicate apprehensions that men have concerning the state of the church and its rule. For if the state of it be national or diocesan, if the rule of it be by arbitrary rules and canons, from an authority exerting itself in courts ecclesiastical, legal or illegal, the order of things here described by the apostle doth no way belong, nor can be accommodated thereunto. To suppose that we have a full description and account in these words of all the offices and officers of the church, of their duty and authority, of all they have to do, and the manner how they are to do it, is altogether unreasonable and senseless unto them, who have another idea of church-affairs and rule, conceived in their minds, or received by tradition, and riveted by interest. And on the other hand; those who know little or nothing of what belongs unto the due edification of the church, beyond preaching the word and reaping the advantage that is obtained thereby, cannot see any necessity of the distribution of these several works and duties unto several officers; but suppose all may be done well enough by one or two in the same office. Wherefore, it will be necessary, that we treat briefly of the nature of the rule of the church in particular, and what is required thereunto, which shall be done in the close of this discourse.

9. The exceptions which are usually put in unto this testimony, have not the least countenance from the text or context, nor the matter treated of, nor confirmation from any other divine testimony. It is therefore in vain to contend about them, being such as any man may multiply at his pleasure on the like occasion; and used by those who, on other considerations, are not willing that things should be as they are here declared to be by the apostle. Yet we may take a brief specimen of them. Some say it is gifts absolutely without respect unto distinct offices, that the apostle treats of; which hath been disproved from the text and context before.

Some say that rule is included in the pastoral office, so as that the pastor only is here intended. But, (1.) Rule is not his principal work, which he is to attend unto in a peculiar manner with diligence above other parts of his duty. (2.) The care of the poor of the flock belongs also to the pastoral office, yet is there another office appointed to attend unto it in a peculiar manner; Acts vi. (3.) 'He that ruleth,' is in this place expressly distinguished from 'him that exhorteth,' and 'him that teacheth.' Some say, that he that ruleth, is he that ruleth his family. But this is disproved by the analysis of the chapter before declared. And this duty, which is common unto all that have families, and confined unto their families, is ill placed among those public duties, which are designed unto the edification of the whole church. It is objected, that he that ruleth, is here placed after him that giveth, that is the deacon; I say then it cannot be the pastor that is intended; if we may prescribe methods of expressing himself unto the apostle. But he useth his liberty, and doth not oblige himself unto any order in the annumeration of the offices of the church; see 1 Cor. xii. 8—10. 28. And some other exceptions are insisted on of the same nature and importance, which indeed deserve not our consideration.

10. There is the same evidence given unto the truth argued for, in another testimony of the same apostle, 1 Cor. xii. 28. 'God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.' I shall not insist on this testimony and its vindication in particular, seeing many things would be required thereunto, which have been treated of already. Some things may be briefly observed concerning it. That there is here an annumeration of officers and offices in the church, both extraordinary for that season, and ordinary for continuance, is beyond exception. Unto them is added, the present exercise of some extraordinary gifts, as miracles, healing, tongues. That by helps, the deacons of the church are intended, most do agree, because their original institution was as helpers in the affairs of the church. Governments, are governors or rulers, the abstract for the concrete; that is, such as are distinct from teachers; such hath God placed in the church, and such there ought to be. But it is said

that gifts, not offices, are intended; the gift of government, or gift for government. If so, then these gifts are either ordinary or extraordinary; if ordinary, how come they to be reckoned among miracles, healing, and tongues? if extraordinary, what extraordinary gifts for government were then given distinct from those of the apostles; and what instance is any where given of them in the Scripture? Again, if God hath given gifts for government to abide in the church, distinct from those given unto teachers, and unto other persons than the teachers, then is there a distinct office of rule or government in the church, which is all we plead for.

11. The original order of these things is plain in the Scripture. The apostles had all church-power and church-office in themselves, with authority to exercise all acts of them everywhere on all occasions. But considering the nature of the church, with that of the rule appointed by the Lord Christ in it or over it; they did not, they would not, ordinarily exercise their power by themselves or in their own persons alone. And therefore, when the first church consisted of a small number, the apostles acted all things in it, by the consent of the whole multitude, or the fraternity, as we have proved from Acts i. And when the number of believers increased, so as that the apostles themselves could not in their own persons attend unto all the duties that were to be performed towards the church by virtue of office, they added by the direction of the Holy Ghost, the office of the deacons, for the especial discharge of the duty which the church oweth unto its poor members. Whereas therefore it is evident, that the apostles could no more personally attend unto the rule of the church, with all that belongs thereunto, without an entrenchment on that labour in the word and prayer, which was incumbent on them, than they could attend unto the relief of the poor; they appointed elders, to help and assist in that part of office-work, as the deacons did in the other.

These elders are first mentioned, Acts xi. 30. where they are spoken of as those which are well known, and had now been of some time in the church. Afterward they are still mentioned in conjunction with the apostles, and distinction from the church itself, Acts xv. 2. 4. 6. 22. xvi. 4. xxi. 18. Now the apostles themselves were teaching elders, that is,

such as had the work of teaching and rule committed to them; 1 Pet. v. 1. 2 John i. And these elders are constantly distinguished from them; which makes it evident, that they were not teaching elders. And therefore in all the mention that is made of them, the work of teaching or preaching is nowhere ascribed unto them; which at Jerusalem the apostles reserved to themselves; Acts vi. 2, 3. but they are everywhere introduced as joining with the apostles in the rule of the church, and that in distinction from the church itself or the brethren of it. Yea, it is altogether improbable, that whilst the apostles were at Jerusalem, giving themselves wholly unto the word and prayer, that they should appoint in the same church many more teaching elders; though it is plain that the elders intended were many.

I shall add for a close of all, that there is no sort of churches in being but are of this persuasion, that there ought to be rulers in the church, that are not in sacred orders, as some call them; or have no interest in the pastoral or ministerial office, as unto the dispensation of the word, and administration of the sacraments. For as the government of the Roman church is in the hands of such persons in a great measure, so in the church of England, much of the rule of it is managed by chancellors, officials, commissaries, and the like officers, who are absolutely lay-men, and not at all in their holy orders. Some would place the rule of the church in the civil magistrate, who is the only ruling elder, as they suppose. But the generality of all Protestant churches throughout the world, both Lutherans and reformed, do both in their judgment and practice assert the necessity of the ruling elders which we plead for; and their office lies at the foundation of all their order and discipline, which they cannot forego without extreme confusion; yea, without the ruin of their churches. And although some among us, considering particular churches only as small societies, may think there is no need of any such office or officers for rule in them; yet when such churches consist of some thousands, without any opportunity of distributing themselves into several congregations, as at Charenton in France, it is a weak imagination, that the rule of Christ can be observed in them by two or three ministers alone. Hence, in the primitive times we have instances of ten, twenty, yea, forty elders in a particular

church, wherein they had respect unto the institution under the Old Testament, whereby each ten families were to have a peculiar ruler. However, it is certain that there is such a reformation in all sorts of churches, that there ought to be some attending unto rule, that are not called to labour in the word and doctrine.

CHAP. VIII.

The nature of church-polity or rule, with the duty of elders.

HAVING declared who are the rulers of the church, something must be added concerning the rule itself, which is to be exercised therein. Hereof I have treated before in general: that which I now design, is, what in particular respects them who are called unto rule only; whereunto some considerations must be premised.

1. There is power, authority, and rule granted unto and residing in some persons of the church, and not in the body of the fraternity or community of the people. How far the government of the church may be denominated democratical from the necessary consent of the people unto the principal acts of it in its exercise, I shall not determine. But whereas this consent, and the liberty of it, is absolutely necessary according to the law of obedience unto Christ, which is prescribed unto the church, requiring that all they do in compliance therewith be voluntary; as unto the manner of its exercise, being in dutiful compliance with the guidance of the rule, it changeth not the state of the government. And therefore, where any thing is acted and disposed in the church, by suffrage, or the plurality of voices, the vote of the fraternity is not determining and authoritative, but only declarative of consent and obedience. It is so, in all acts of rule where the church is organical, or in complete order.

2. That there is such an authority and rule instituted by Christ in his church, is not liable unto dispute. Where there are bishops, pastors, elders, guides, rulers, stewards, instituted, given, granted, called, ordained; and some to be

ruled, sheep, lambs, brethren, obliged by command to obey them, follow them, submit unto them in the Lord, regard them as over them: there is rule and authority in some persons, and that committed unto them by Jesus Christ. But all these things are frequently repeated in the Scripture. And when in the practical part or exercise of rule, due respect is not had unto their authority, there is nothing but confusion and disorder. When the people judge that the power of the keys is committed unto them as such only, and in them doth the right of their use and exercise reside; that their elders have no interest in the disposing of church affairs, or in acts of church-power, but only their own suffrages, or what they can obtain by reasoning; and think there is no duty incumbent on them to acquiesce in their authority in any thing (an evil apt to grow in churches), it overthrows all that beautiful order, which Jesus Christ hath ordained. And if any shall make advantage of this complaint, that where the people have their due liberty granted unto them, they are apt to assume that power unto themselves which belongs not unto them; an evil attended with troublesome impertinencies and disorder, tending unto anarchy; let them remember, on the other hand, how upon the confinement of power and authority unto the guides, bishops or rulers of the church, they have changed the nature of church-power, and enlarged their usurpation, until the whole rule of the church issued in absolute tyranny. Wherefore, no fear of consequents that may ensue and arise from the darkness, ignorance, weakness, lusts, corruptions, or secular interests of men, ought to entice us unto the least alteration of the rule by any prudential provisions of our own.

3. This authority in the rulers of the church is neither autocratical or sovereign, nor nomothetical or legislative, nor despotical or absolute; but organical and ministerial only. The endless controversies which have sprung out of the mystery of iniquity, about an autocratical and monarchical government in the church, about power to make laws to bind the consciences of men, yea, to kill and destroy them, with the whole manner of the execution of this power, we are not concerned in. A pretence of any such power in the church is destructive of the kingly office of Christ, contrary

to express commands of Scripture, and condemned by the apostles; Isa. xxxiii. 22. Jam. iv. 12. Matt. xvii. 5. xxiii. 8—11. Luke xxii. 25. 26. 2 Cor. i. 24. 1 Cor. iii. 21—23. 2 Cor. iv. 5. 1 Pet. v. 1. 25.

4. As the rule of the church, in those by whom it is exercised, is merely ministerial, with respect unto the authority of Christ, his law, and the liberty of the church, wherewith he hath made it free; so in its nature it is spiritual, purely and only. So the apostle affirms expressly, 2 Cor. x. 4—6. for its object is spiritual; namely, the souls and consciences of men whereunto it extends, which no other human power doth; nor doth it reach those other concerns of men that are subject unto any political power: its end is spiritual, namely, the glory of God, in the guidance and direction of the minds and souls of men, to live unto him, and come to the enjoyment of him; the law of it is spiritual, even the word, command, and direction of Christ himself alone; the acts and exercise of it in binding and loosing, in remitting and retaining sin, in opening and shutting the kingdom of heaven, are all spiritual merely and only. Neither can there be an instance given of any thing belonging unto the rule of the church, that is of another nature. Yea, it is sufficient eternally to exclude any power or exercise of it, any act of rule or government from any interest in church-affairs, that it can be proved to be carnal, political, despotical, of external operation, or not entirely spiritual.

5. The change of this government of the church fell out and was introduced gradually, upon an advantage taken from the unmeetness of the people to be led under this spiritual rule. For the greatest part of them that made up Christian churches being become ignorant and carnal, that rule which consists in a spiritual influence on the consciences of men, was no way able to retain them within the bounds of outward obedience, which was at last only aimed at. There was therefore another kind of rule and government judged necessary to retain them in any order or decorum. And it must be acknowledged, that where the members of the church are not in some degree spiritual, a rule that is merely spiritual will be of no great use unto them. But principally, this change was introduced by those that were in possession of the rule itself; and that on two grounds. (1.) Their un-

skilfulness in the management of this spiritual rule, or weariness of the duties which are required thereunto: this made them willing to desert it; with that perpetual labour and exercise of all sorts of graces which are required in it, and to embrace another more easy, and more suited unto their inclinations. (2.) A desire of the secular advantages of profit, honour, and veneration, which tendered themselves unto them in another kind of rule: by these means was the original government of the church, which was of divine institution, utterly lost; and a worldly domination introduced in the room thereof. But the brief delineation given of it before, with what shall now be added, will demonstrate sufficiently, that all these disputes and contests which are in the world, between the church of Rome and others about church-power and rule, are utterly foreign unto Christian religion.

6. I shall therefore briefly inquire into these three things: 1. What is the skill and polity that is required unto the exercise, or administration of the government of the church? 2. What is the sole law and rule of it? 3. What are the acts and duties of it? What it is conversant about; especially those wherein the office of ruling elders doth take place.

1. The polity of church-government subjectively considered, is generally supposed to consist, (1.) In a skill, learning or understanding in the civil, and especially, the canon, law, with the additional canons, accommodating that law unto the present state of things of the nation, to be interpreted according unto the general rules of it. (2.) Knowledge of and acquaintance with the constitution, power, jurisdiction, and practice of some law courts; which being in their original, grant of power, manner of proceeding, pleas and censures merely secular, are yet called ecclesiastical or spiritual. (3.) A good discretion to understand aright the extent of their power, with the bounds and limits of it; that on the one hand they let none escape whom they can reach by the discipline of their courts, and on the other not entrench so far on the civil power and the jurisdiction of other courts according to the law of the land, as to bring themselves into charge or trouble. (4.) An acquaintance with the table of fees, that they may neither lose their own profit, nor give

advantage unto others to question them for taking more than their due. But in these things we are not at present concerned.

The skill then of the officers of the church for the government of it, is a spiritual wisdom and understanding in the law of Christ, for that end, with an ability to make application of it in all requisite instances, unto the edification of the whole church, and all its members, through a ministerial exercise of the authority of Christ himself, and a due representation of his holiness, love, care, compassion, and tenderness towards his church.

(1.) The sole rule and measure of the government of the church being the law of Christ; that is, the intimation and declaration of his mind and will, in his institutions, commands, prohibitions, and promises; an understanding herein, with wisdom, from that understanding, is and must be the whole of the skill inquired after. How this wisdom is bestowed as a spiritual gift, how it is to be acquired in a way of duty, by prayer, meditation, and study of the word, hath been intimated before, and shall fully be declared, in our discourse of spiritual gifts. All decrees and decretals, canons and glosses, come properly in this matter under one title of them, namely extravagant. The utmost knowledge of them, and skill in them, will contribute nothing unto this wisdom. Neither are any sort of men more strangers unto it, or unacquainted with it, than they are, for the most part, who are eminently cunning in such laws, and the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts. But wisdom in the knowledge of the will of Christ as revealed in the Scripture, is that alone which is of use in the government of the church.

(2.) A part of this wisdom consisteth in an ability of mind to make application of the law of Christ, in all requisite instances, unto the edification of the church in general, and all the members of it respectively. This wisdom is not notional only, but practical. It consists not in a speculative comprehension of the sense of the rule, or of the mind of Christ therein only, though that be required in the first place; but in an ability of mind to make application of it, whereunto diligence, care, watchfulness, and spiritual courage are required. Some are to be admonished; some to be rebuked sharply; some to be cut off; in which and the like

cases, a spirit of government acting itself in diligence, boldness, and courage is necessary. And this is one reason why the Lord Christ hath appointed many elders in each church, and those of several sorts. For it is seldom that any one man is qualified for the whole work of rule. Some may have a good understanding in the law of the church's government; yet through a natural tenderness, and an insuperable kind of modesty, not be so ready and prompt for that part of this discipline which consists in reproofs and severity of censures. Some may not have so great an ability for the indagation of the sense of the law as others have; who yet upon the knowledge of it being discovered unto them, have readiness and boldness in Christ to apply it as occasion doth require. All elders, therefore, in their variety of gifts are to be helpful to each other in the common work which they are called unto. But such as are utterly destitute of these gifts, are not called unto this work; nor any part of it.

(3.) The power that is exercised herein, is the power and authority of Christ committed unto the elders. 'Our authority, which the Lord Christ hath given us for edification, and not for destruction;' 2 Cor. x. 8. It is granted unto the rulers of the church, not formally to reside in them, as the power of a king is in his own person; but ministerially and instrumentally only. For it must be the authority of Christ himself, whereby the consciences of men are spiritually affected, with reference unto spiritual ends; whereby they are bound or loosed in heaven and earth, have their sins remitted or retained. And the consideration hereof is that alone which gives a due regard unto the ministry of the church, in the discharge of their office among them that desire to commend their consciences unto the Lord Christ in what they do.

(4.) The especial design of the rule of the church in its government is, to represent the holiness, love, compassion, care, and authority of Christ towards his church. This is the great end of rule in the church, and of all the discipline which is to be exercised by virtue thereof. Whilst this is not attended unto, when the officers and rulers of the church do not endeavour, in all the actings of their power and office, to set forth these virtues of Christ; to exemplify that impression of them which he hath left in his laws and rule, with

the divine testimonies which he gives of them in his own person, they utterly deviate from the principal end of all rule in the church. For men to act herein in a way of domination, with a visible elation of mind and spirit above their brethren, with anger, wrath, and passion, by rules, order, and laws of their own devising; without the least consideration of what the Lord Christ requires, and what is the frame of his heart towards all his disciples, is to reflect the highest dishonour imaginable upon Christ himself. He who comes into the courts of the king in Westminster-hall, when filled with judges, grave, learned, and righteous, must ordinarily be allowed to judge of the king himself, his wisdom, justice, moderation, and clemency, by the law which they proceed upon, and their manner of the administration of it. But God forbid that Christians should make a judgment concerning the holiness, wisdom, love, and compassion of Christ, by the representation which (as is pretended) is made of him and them in some courts, wherein church-rule and discipline is administered. When any had offended of old, their censure by the church was called the bewailing of them; 2 Cor. xii. 21. and that because of the sorrow, pity, and compassion whereby in that censure they evidenced the compassion of the Lord Christ towards the souls of sinners. This is scarce answered by those pecuniary mulcts and other penalties, which, with indignation and contempt, are inflicted on such as are made offenders, whether they will or no. Certainly, those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and have a due honour for the gospel, will at one time or another begin to think meet, that this stain of our religion should be washed away.

2. The rule and law of the exercise of power in the elders of the church, is the Holy Scripture only. The Lord Christ is the only lawgiver of the church; all his laws unto this end are recorded in the Scripture; no other law is effectual, can oblige or operate upon the object or unto the ends of church-rule. If the church make a thousand rules, or canons, or laws for government, neither any of them, nor all of them in general, have any the least power to oblige men unto obedience or compliance with them, but only so far as virtually and materially they contain what is of the law of Christ, and derives force from thence. As the judges in our courts of

justice are bound to judge and determine in all cases out of and according to the law of the land; and when they do not, their sentence is of no validity, but may and ought to be reversed. But if wilfully or of choice they should introduce laws or rules not legally established in this nation, judging according unto them, it would render them highly criminal and punishable. It is no otherwise in the kingdom of Christ, and the rule thereof. It is by his law alone that rule is to be exercised in it. There is nothing left unto the elders of the church but the application of his laws, and the general rules of them, unto particular cases and occasions. To make, to bring, to execute any other rules, laws, or canons in the government of his church, is to usurp on his kingly dominion, whereunto all legislative power in the church is appropriate. Nor is it possible that anything can fall out in the church, that anything can be required in the rule of it, nor can any instance be given of any such thing, wherein, for the ends of church-rule, there is or can be any more left unto the rulers of it, but only the application and execution of the laws of Christ. Unto this application, to be made in a due manner, the wisdom and skill before described is requisite, and that alone. Where there are other laws, rules, or canons of the government of the church; and where the administration of them is directed by laws civil or political, there is a skill in them required unto that administration, as all will confess. So is the wisdom we before described, and that alone, necessary unto that rule of the church which the Lord Christ hath ordained; the instrument and means whereof, is his word and law alone.

3. The matter of this rule about which it is conversant, and so the acts and duties of it, may be reduced unto three heads.

1. The admission and exclusion of members. Both these are acts of church-power and authority, which are to be exercised by the elders only in a church that is organical and complete in its officers. There is that in them both which is founded in and warranted from the light and law of nature and rules of equity. Every righteous voluntary society coalescing therein rightfully, upon known laws, and rules for the regulation of it unto certain ends, hath naturally a power inherent in it, and inseparable from it, to receive into its in-

corporation such as, being meet for it, do voluntarily offer themselves thereunto; as also to reject, or withhold the privileges of the society from, such as refuse to be regulated by the laws of the society. This power is inherent in the church, essentially considered, antecedently unto the instating of officers in it: by virtue of their mutual confederation they may receive into the privileges of the society those that are meet, and withdraw the same privileges from those that are unworthy. But in these actings of the church, essentially considered, there is no exercise of the power of the keys, as unto authoritative rule, but what is merely doctrinal. There is in what it doth a declaration of the mind of Christ, as unto the state of the persons whom they do receive or reject. But unto the church as organical, as there are elders or rulers instated in it according unto the mind of Christ, there is a peculiar authority committed for those acts of the admission and exclusion of members. Unto this end is the key of rule committed unto the elders of the church, to be applied with the consent of the whole society, as we shall see afterward.

2. The direction of the church in all the members of it, unto the observance of the rule and law of Christ in all things, unto his glory and their own edification. And all these things may be reduced unto these four heads. (1.) Mutual, intense, peculiar love among themselves, to be exercised continually in all the duties of it. (2.) Personal holiness in gracious moral obedience. (3.) Usefulness towards the members of the same church, towards other churches, and all men absolutely, as occasion and opportunity do require. (4.) The due performance of all those duties, which all the members of the church owe mutually unto each other, by virtue of that place and order which they hold and possess in the body. About these things is church-rule to be exercised: for they all belong unto the preservation of its being, and the attainment of its ends.

3. Hereunto also belongs the disposal of the outward concernments of the church in its assemblies, and in the management of all that is performed in them, 'that all things may be done decently and in order.' The disposal of times, seasons, places, the way and manner of managing all things in church assemblies, the regulation of speeches and actions, the appointment of seasons for extraordinary duties, accord-

ing unto the general rules of the word, and the reason of things from present circumstances, are acts of rule, whose right resides in the elders of the church.

These things being premised, we may consider what is the work and duty of that sort of elders, which we have proved to be placed by Christ for rule in the church. For, considering that which hath been spoken before concerning the pastoral office, or the duty of teaching elders of the church, and what hath now been added concerning its rule in general; I cannot but admire that any one man should have such a confidence in his own abilities, as to suppose himself meet and able for the discharge of the duties of both sorts in the least church of Christ that can well be supposed. Yea, supposing more teaching elders in every church than one, yet if they are all and every one of them equally bound to give themselves unto the word and prayer, so as not to be diverted from that work by any inferior duties, if they are obliged to labour in the word and doctrine to the utmost of their strength continually, it will appear at length to be necessary, that there should be some whose peculiar office and duty is to attend unto rule with diligence. And the work of these elders consists in the things ensuing.

1. They are joined unto the teaching elders in all acts and duties of church-power, for the rule and government of the church. Such are those before declared. This is plain in the text, 1 Tim. v. 17. Both sorts of elders are joined and do concur in the same rule and all the acts of it; one sort of them labouring also in the word and doctrine. Of both sorts is the presbytery or eldership composed, wherein resides all church authority. And in this conjunction, those of both sorts are every way equal, determining all acts of rule by their common suffrage. This gives order, with a necessary representation of authority, unto the church in its government.

2. They are in particular to attend unto all things wherein the rule or discipline of the church is concerned, with a due care that the commands of Christ be duly observed by and among all the members of the church. This is the substance of the rule which Christ hath appointed, whatever be pretended unto the contrary. Whatever is set up in the world, in opposition unto it, or inconsistent with it, under

the name of the government of the church, is foreign unto the gospel. Church-rule is a due care and provision, that the institutions, laws, commands, and appointments of Jesus Christ be duly observed, and nothing else. And hereof, as unto the duty of the elders, we may give some instances. As,

1. To watch diligently over the ways, walking, and conversation of all the members of the church, to see that it be blameless, without offence, useful, exemplary, and in all things answering the holiness of the commands of Christ, the honour of the gospel, and profession which in the world they make thereof. And upon the observation which they so make, in the watch wherein they are placed, to instruct, admonish, charge, exhort, encourage, comfort, as they see cause. And this are they to attend unto with courage and diligence.

2. To watch against all risings or appearances of such differences and divisions on the account of things ecclesiastical or civil, as unto their names, rights, and proprieties in the world, that are contrary unto that love which the Lord Christ requireth in a peculiar and eminent manner to be found amongst his disciples. This he calls his own new command, with respect unto his authority requiring it, his example first illustrating it in the world, and the peculiar fruits and effects of it which he revealed and taught. Wherefore, the due observance of this law of love in itself and all its fruits, with the prevention, removal, or condemnation of all that is contrary unto it, is that in which the rule of the church doth principally consist. And considering the weakness, the passions, the temptations of men, the mutual provocations and exasperations that are apt to fall out even among the best, the influence that earthly occasions are apt to have upon their minds, the frowardness sometimes of men's natural tempers; the attendance unto this one duty or part of rule, requires the utmost diligence of them that are called unto it. And it is merely either the want of acquaintance with the nature of that law and its fruits, which the Lord Christ requires among his disciples, or an undervaluation of the worth and glory of it in the church, or inadvertency unto the causes of its decays, and of breaches made in it; or ignorance of the care and duties that are

necessary unto its preservation, that induce men to judge that the work of an especial office is not required hereunto.

3. Their duty is to warn all the members of the church of their especial church duties, that they be not found negligent or wanting in them. There are especial duties required respectively of all church members, according unto the distinct talents, whether in things spiritual or temporal, which they have received. Some are rich, and some are poor; some are old, and some are young; some in peace, some in trouble; some have received more spiritual gifts than others, and have more opportunities for their exercise. It belongs unto the rule of the church, that all be admonished, instructed, and exhorted to attend unto their respective duties; not only publicly in the preaching of the word, but personally as occasion doth require, according to the observation which those in rule do make of their forwardness or remissness in them. In particular, and in the way of instance, men are to be warned that they contribute unto the necessities of the poor, and other occasions of the church, according unto the ability that God in his providence hath intrusted them withal; and to admonish them that are defective herein, in order to their recovery unto the discharge of this duty, in such a measure as there may be an equality in the church; 2 Cor. viii. 14. And all other duties of an alike nature are they to attend unto.

4. They are to watch against the beginnings of any church-disorders, such as those that infested the church of Corinth, or any of the like sort; with remissness as unto the assemblies of the church and the duties of them, which some are subject unto, as the apostle intimates, Heb. x. 25. On the constancy and diligence of the elders in this part of their work and duty, the very being and order of the church do greatly depend. The want hereof hath opened a door unto all the troubles, divisions, and schisms, that in all ages have invaded and perplexed the churches of Christ from within themselves. And from thence also have decays in faith, love, and order insensibly prevailed in many, to the dishonour of Christ, and the danger of their own souls. First, one grows remiss in attending unto the assemblies of the church, and then another; first to one degree, then to another, until the whole lump be infected. A diligent watch

over these things, as to the beginnings of them, in all the members of the church, will either heal and recover them that offend, or it will warn others, and keep the church from being either corrupted or defiled; Heb. iii. xii.

5. It belongs unto them also to visit the sick, especially such as whose inward or outward conditions do expose them unto more than ordinary trials in their sickness; that is, the poor, the afflicted, the tempted in any kind. This in general is a moral duty, a work of mercy; but it is moreover a peculiar church-duty by virtue of institution. And one end of the institution of churches, is, that the disciples of Christ may have all that spiritual and temporal relief which is needful for them, and useful to them, in their troubles and distresses. And if this duty were diligently attended unto by the officers of the church, it would add much unto the glory and beauty of our order, and be an abiding reserve with relief in the minds of them whose outward condition exposeth them to straits and sorrows in such a season.

I add hereunto, as a duty of the same nature, the visitation of those who suffer unto restraint and imprisonment upon the account of their profession, adherence unto church-assemblies, or the discharge of any pastoral or office-duties in them. This is a case wherewith we are not unacquainted, nor are like so to be. Some look on this as the duty of all the members of the church, who yet enjoy their liberty; and so it is, as their opportunities and abilities will allow them, provided their discharge of it be useful unto those whom they visit, and inoffensive unto others. But this duty diligently attended unto by the elders, representing therein the care and love of the whole church, yea, of Christ himself unto his prisoners, is a great spring of relief and comfort unto them. And by the elders may the church be acquainted what yet is required of them in a way of duty on their account. The care of the primitive churches herein was most eminent.

6. It belongs unto them and their office, to advise with and give direction unto the deacons of the church, as unto the making provision and distribution of the charity of the church for the relief of the poor. The office of the deacons is principally executive, as we shall see afterward. Inquisition into the state of the poor, with all their circumstances,

with the warning of all the members of the church unto liberality for their supply, belongs unto the elders.

7. When the state of the church is such, through suffering, persecution, and affliction, that the poor be multiplied among them, so as that the church itself is not able to provide for their relief in a due manner, if any supply be sent unto them from the love and bounty of other churches, it is to be deposited with these elders, and disposed according to to their advice, with that of the teachers of the church; Acts xi. 30.

8. It is also their duty, according to the advantage which they have by their peculiar inspection of all the members of the church, their ways, and their walking, to acquaint the pastors, or teaching-elders of the church, with the state of the flock, which may be of singular use unto them for their direction in the present work of the ministry. He who makes it not his business to know the state of the church which he ministers unto in the word and doctrine, as to their knowledge, their judgment and understanding, their temptations and occasions, and applies not himself in his ministry to search out what is necessary and useful unto their edification; he fights uncertainly in his whole work, as a man beating the air. But, whereas their obligation to attend unto the word and prayer, confines them much unto a retirement for the greatest part of their time, they cannot by themselves obtain that acquaintance with the whole flock, but that others may greatly assist therein from their daily inspection, converse, and observation.

9. And it is their duty to meet and consult with the teaching-elders, about such things of importance, as are to be proposed in and unto the church, for its consent and compliance. Hence, nothing crude or indigested, nothing unsuited to the sense and duty of the church, will at any time be proposed therein, so to give occasion unto contests or janglings, disputes contrary unto order or decency; but all things may be preserved in a due regard unto the gravity and authority of the rulers.

10. To take care of the due liberties of the church, that they be not imposed on by any Diotrephes in office, or without it.

11. It is incumbent on them in times of difficulties and persecution, to consult together with the other elders concerning all those things which concern the present duty of the church, from time to time, and their preservation from violence, according unto the will of Christ.

12. Whereas, there may be, and oft-times is, but one teaching-elder, pastor, or teacher in a church, upon his death or removal, it is the work and duty of these elders to preserve the church in peace and unity; to take care of the continuation of its assemblies; to prevent irregularities in any persons or parties among them; to go before, to direct and guide the church in the call and choice of some other meet person or persons in the room of the deceased or removed.

These few instances have I given of the work and duty of ruling elders. They are all of them such as deserve a greater enlargement in their declaration and confirmation, than I can here afford unto them. And sundry things of the like nature, especially with respect unto communion with other churches and synods: but what hath been spoken is sufficient unto my present purpose. And to manifest that it is so, I shall add the ensuing observations.

1. All the things insisted on, do undoubtedly and unquestionably belong unto the rule and order appointed by Christ in his church. There is no one of them that is liable unto any just exception from them by whom all church-order is despised. Wherefore, where there is a defect in them or any of them, the church itself is defective as unto its own edification. And where this defect is great, in many of them, there can be no beauty, no glory, no order in any church, but only an outward show and appearance of them. And that all these things do belong unto the duty of these elders, there needs no other proof nor confirmation, but that they all undoubtedly and unquestionably belong unto that rule and order, which the Lord Christ hath appointed in his church, and which the Scripture testifieth unto, both in general and particular. For all the things which belong unto the rule of the church, are committed to the care of the rulers of the church.

2. It is a vain apprehension to suppose that one or two teaching officers in a church, who are obliged to give them-

selves unto the word and prayer, to labour with all their might in the word and doctrine, to preach in and out of season; that is, at all times, on all opportunities, as they are able, to convince gainsayers by word and writing, pleading for the truth; to assist and guide the consciences of all, under their temptations and desertions, with sundry other duties, in part spoken to before, should be able to take care of, and attend with diligence unto these things that do evidently belong unto the rule of the church. And hence it is, that churches at this day do live on the preaching of the word, the proper work of their pastor, which they greatly value, and are very little sensible of the wisdom, goodness, love, and care of Christ, in the institution of this rule in the church, nor are partakers of the benefits of it unto their edification. And the supply which many have made hitherto herein, by persons either unacquainted with their duty, or insensible of their own authority, or cold, if not negligent, in their work, doth not answer the end of their institution. And hence it is that the authority of government, and the benefit of it, are ready to be lost in most churches. And it is both vainly and presumptuously pleaded, to give countenance unto a neglect of their order, that some churches do walk in love and peace, and are edified without it; supplying some defects by the prudent aid of some members of them. For it is nothing but a preference of our own wisdom unto the wisdom and authority of Christ; or at best, an unwillingness to make a venture on the warranty of his rule, for fear of some disadvantages that may ensue thereon.

3. Whereas, sundry of the duties before mentioned, are, as unto the substance of them, required of the members of the church, in their several stations, without any especial obligation to attend unto them with diligence, to look after them, or power to exercise any authority in the discharge of them, to leave them from under the office-care of the elders, is to let in confusion and disorder into the church, and gradually to remove the whole advantage of the discipline of Christ, as it is come to pass in many churches already.

It is therefore evident, that neither the purity, nor the order, nor the beauty or glory of the churches of Christ, nor the representation of his own majesty and authority in the government of them, can be long preserved without a multi-

plication of elders in them, according to the proportion of their respective members, for their rule and guidance. And for want hereof have churches of old and of late, either degenerated into anarchy and confusion, their self-rule being managed with vain disputes and janglings, unto their division and ruin; or else given up themselves unto the domination of some prelatical teachers, to rule them at their pleasure, which proved the bane and poison of all the primitive churches; and they will and must do so in the neglect of this order for the future.

CHAP. IX.

Of deacons.

The original institution, nature, and use of the office of deacons in the church, are so well known, as that we need not much insist upon them. Nor shall I treat of the name which is common unto any kind of ministry civil or sacred; but speak of it as it is appropriated unto that especial work for which this office was ordained.

The remote foundation of it lieth in that of our Saviour, 'The poor you have always with you;' John xii. 8. He doth not only foretel that such there should be in the church, but recommends the care of them who should be so, unto the church. For he maketh use of the words of the law, Deut. xv. 11. 'For the poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy.' This legal institution, founded in the law of nature, doth the Lord Christ by his authority transfer and translate unto the use of gospel churches among his disciples.

And it may be observed, that at the same instant hypocrisy and avarice began to attempt their advantage on the consideration of this provision for the poor, which they afterward effected unto their safety. For on the pretence hereof, Judas immediately condemned an eminent duty towards the person of Christ, as containing a cost in it,

which might have been better laid out in provision for the poor: the ointment poured on our Saviour he thought might have been sold for three hundred pence (it may be about forty or fifty pound), and given to the poor, 'But this he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag;' out of which he could have made a good prey unto himself; John xii. 6. And it may be observed, that although Judas maliciously began this murmuring; yet at last some of the other disciples were too credulous of his insinuation, seeing the other evangelists ascribe it to them also. But the same pretence, on the same grounds, in following ages was turned unto the greatest advantage of hypocrisy and covetousness that ever was in the world. For under this pretence of providing for the poor, the thieves who had got the bag, that is, the ruling part of the clergy, with the priests, friars, and monks, who served them, allowed men in the neglect of the greatest and most important duties of religion towards Christ himself, so as that they would give all that they had to the poor; not that they cared for the poor, but because they were thieves, and had the bag; by which means they possessed themselves of the greatest part of the wealth of the nations professing Christian religion. This was their compliance with the command of Christ; which they equally made use of in other things.

This foundation of their office was farther raised by the preaching of the gospel among the poor. Many of them who first received it, were of that state and condition as the Scripture every where testifieth: 'The poor are evangelized;' Matt. xi. 5. 'God hath chosen the poor;' James ii. 5. And so it was in the first ages of the church; where the provision for them was one of the most eminent graces and duties of the church in those days. And this way became the original propagation of the gospel. For it was made manifest thereby, that the doctrine and profession of it was not a matter of worldly design or advantage; God also declared therein of how little esteem with him the riches of this world are; and also provision was made for the exercise of the grace of the rich in their supply, the only way whereby they may glorify God with their substance. And it were well if all churches, and all the members of them, would wisely consider how eminent is this grace, how ex-

cellent is this duty, of making provision for the poor, how much the glory of Christ and honour of the gospel are concerned herein. For, whereas for the most part it is looked on as an ordinary work to be performed transiently and curiously, scarce deserving any of the time which is allotted unto the church's public service and duties, it is indeed one of the most eminent duties of Christian societies, wherein the principal exercise of the second evangelical grace, namely, love, doth consist.

The care of making provision for the poor being made in the church an institution of Christ, was naturally incumbent on them who were the first only officers of the church, that is, the apostles. This is plain from the occasion of the institution of the office of the deacons, Acts vi. The whole work and care of the church being in their hands, it was impossible that they should attend unto the whole and all the parts of it in any manner. Whereas, therefore, they gave themselves, according to their duty, mostly unto those parts of their work, which were incomparably more excellent and necessary than the other, namely, preaching of the word and prayer; there was such a defect in this other part of ministration unto the poor, as must unavoidably accompany the actings of human nature, not able to apply itself constantly unto things of diverse natures at the same time. And hereon those who were concerned quickly, as the manner of all is, expressed their resentment of a neglect in somewhat an undue order; there was 'a murmuring about it;' ver. 1. The apostles hereon declared that the principal part of the work of the ministry in the church, namely, the word and prayer, was sufficient for them constantly to attend unto. Afterward indeed, men began to think that they could do all in the church themselves, but it was when they began to do nothing in a due manner. And whereas the apostles chose, as their duty, the work of prayer and preaching, as that which they would and ought entirely to give up themselves unto, and for the sake of that work would deposit the care of other things on other hands; they are a strange kind of successors unto them, who lay aside that work which they determined to belong unto them principally and in the first place, to apply themselves unto any thing else whatever.

Yet did not the apostles hereon utterly forego the care of providing for the poor, which being originally committed unto them by Jesus Christ, they would not divest themselves wholly of it. But by the direction of the Holy Ghost they provided such assistance in the work, as that for the future it might require no more of their time or pains but what they should spare from their principal employment. And the same care is still incumbent on the ordinary pastors and elders of the churches, so far as the execution of it doth not interfere with their principal work and duty, from which those who understand it aright, can spare but little of their time and strength.

Hereon the apostles, by the authority of Christ and direction of the Holy Spirit, under whose infallible guidance they were in all the general concernments of the church, instituted the office of deacons, for the discharge of this necessary and important duty in the church, which they could not attend unto themselves. And whereas the Lord Christ had in an especial manner committed the care of the poor unto the disciples, there was now a declaration of his mind and will, in what way and by what means he would have them provided for.

And it was the institution of a new office, and not a present supply in a work or business, which they designed. For the limitation of an especial ecclesiastical work, with the designation of persons unto that work, with authority for the discharge of it (set over this business), with a separation unto it, do completely constitute an office, nor is there any thing more required thereunto.

But whereas there are three things that concur and are required unto the ministration unto the poor of the church. (1.) The love, charity, bounty, and benevolence of the members of the church, in contribution unto that ministration. (2.) The care and oversight of the discharge of it. And, (3.) The actual exercise and application of it; the last only belongs unto the office of the deacons, and neither of the first are discharged by the institution of it. For the first is both a duty of the light and law of nature, and in its moral part enforced by many especial commands of Christ; so as that nothing can absolve men from their obligation thereunto. The office and work of the deacons is to excite,

direct, and help them in the exercise of that grace, and discharge of the duty therein incumbent on them. Nor is any man, by the intrusting a due proportion of his good things in the hands of the deacons for its distribution, absolved thereby from his own personal discharge of it also. For it being a moral duty required in the law of nature, it receiveth peculiar obligations unto a present exercise by such circumstances as nature and providence do suggest: the care also of the whole work is, as was said, still incumbent on the pastors and elders of the church; only the ordinary execution is committed unto the deacons.

Nor was this a temporary institution for that season, and so the officers appointed extraordinary; but was to abide in the church throughout all generations. For, (1.) The work itself, as a distinct work of ministry in the church, was never to cease, it was to abide for ever; 'The poor you shall have always with you.' (2.) The reason of its institution is perpetual; namely, that the pastors of the churches are not sufficient in themselves to attend unto the whole work of praying, preaching, and this ministration. (3.) They are afterward not only in this church at Jerusalem, but in all the churches of the Gentiles, reckoned among the fixed officers of the church; Phil. i. 1. And, (4.) Direction is given for their continuation in all churches, with a prescription of the qualifications of the person to be chosen and called into this office; 1 Tim. iii. 8. 10, 11. (5.) The way of their call is directed, and an office committed unto them, 'Let them be first proved, then let them use the office of a deacon.' (6.) A promise of acceptance is annexed unto the diligent discharge of this office, ver. 13.

Hence those who afterward utterly perverted all church-order, taking out of the hands and care of the deacons that work which was committed to them by the Holy Ghost in the apostles, and for which end alone their office was instituted in the church, assigning other work unto them, whereunto they are not called nor appointed; yet thought meet to continue the name and the pretence of such an office, because of the evident institution of it, unto a continuation. And whereas when all things were swelling with pride and ambition in the church, no sort of its officers contenting themselves with their primitive institution, but

striving by various degrees to somewhat in name and thing, that was high and aloft, there arose from the name of this office the meteor of an archdeacon, with strange power and authority, never heard of in the church for many ages; but this belongs unto the mystery of iniquity; whereunto neither the Scripture nor the practice of the primitive churches do give the least countenance. But some think it not inconvenient even to sport themselves in matter of church-order and constitutions.

This office of deacons is an office of service, which gives not any authority or power in the rule of the church. But being an office, it gives authority with respect unto the special work of it under a general notion of authority; that is, a right to attend unto it in a peculiar manner, and to perform the things that belong thereunto. But this right is confined unto the particular church whereunto they do belong. Of the members of that church are they to make their collections, and unto the members of that church are they to administer. Extraordinary collections from, or for, other churches, are to be made and disposed by the elders; Acts xi. 30.

Whereas, the reason of the institution of this office was in general to free the pastors of the churches who labour in the word and doctrine from avocations by outward things, such as wherein the church is concerned; it belongs unto the deacons not only to take care of and provide for the poor, but to manage all other affairs of the church of the same kind; such as are providing for the place of the church-assemblies, of the elements for the sacraments, of keeping, collecting, and disposing of the stock of the church, for the maintenance of its officers, and incidencies, especially in the time of trouble or persecution. Hereon are they obliged to attend the elders on all occasions, to perform the duty of the church towards them, and receive directions from them. This was the constant practice of the church in the primitive times, until the avarice and ambition of the superior clergy enclosed all alms and donations unto themselves; the beginning and progress whereof is excellently described and traced by Paulus Sharpius, in his treatise of matters beneficiary.

That maintenance of the poor which they are to distri-

bute, is to be collected by the voluntary contributions of the church, to be made ordinarily every first day of the week, and as occasion shall require, in an extraordinary manner; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. And this contribution of the church ought to be, (1.) In a way of bounty, not sparingly; 2 Cor. ix. 5—7. (2.) In a way of equality, as unto men's abilities; 2 Cor. viii. 13, 14. (3.) With respect unto present successes, and thriving in affairs, whereof a portion is due to God; 'as God hath prospered him;' 1 Cor. xvi. 2. (4.) With willingness and freedom; 2 Cor. viii. 12. vii. Wherefore it belongs unto the deacons in the discharge of their office, (1.) To acquaint the church with the present necessity of the poor. (2.) To stir up the particular members of it unto a free contribution according unto their ability. (3.) To admonish those that are negligent herein, who give not according to their proportion; and to acquaint the elders of the church with those who persist in a neglect of their duty.

The consideration of the state of the poor, unto whom the contributions of the church are to be administered, belongs unto the discharge of this office. As, (1.) That they are poor indeed, and do not pretend themselves so to be, for advantage. (2.) What are the degrees of their poverty, with respect unto their relations and circumstances, that they may have suitable supplies. (3.) That in other things they walk according unto rule. (4.) In particular, that they work and labour according to their ability; for he that will not labour must not eat at the public charge. (5.) To comfort, counsel, and exhort them unto patience, submission, contentment with their condition, and thankfulness; all which might be enlarged and confirmed, but that they are obvious.

The qualifications of persons to be called unto this office, are distinctly laid down by the apostle, 1 Tim. iii. 8—13. Upon the trial, knowledge, and approbation of them, with respect unto these qualifications, their call to this office consists. (1.) In the choice of the church. (2.) In a separation unto it by prayer and imposition of hands; Acts vi. 3. 5, 6. And the adjuncts of their ministration are, (1.) Mercy, to represent the tenderness of Christ towards the poor of the flock; Rom. xii. 8. (2.) Cheerfulness, to relieve the spirits of them that receive, against thoughts of being troublesome and burdensome to others. (3.) Diligence and faithfulness,

by which they 'purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.'

It remains only, that we inquire into some few things relating unto this office, and those that are called unto it. As,

1. What is the meaning of the apostle, where he affirms, that the deacons, in the discharge of their office, *βαθμὸν ἑαυτοῖς καλὸν περιποιοῦνται*, 1 Tim. iii. 13. 'do purchase or procure unto themselves a good degree.' *Βαθμὸς* is a step, a degree, a seat a little exalted, and metaphorically it is applied to denote dignity and authority. This good degree, which deacons may obtain, is in the judgment of most, the office of presbytery. This they shall be promoted unto in the church. From deacons they shall be made presbyters. I cannot comply with this interpretation of the words. For, (1.) The office of presbytery is called *καλὸν ἔργον*, 'a good work,' no where *καλὸς βαθμὸς*, 'a good degree.' (2.) The difference between a deacon and a presbyter is not in degree, but in order. A deacon made a presbyter is not advanced unto a farther degree in his own order; but leaves it for another. (3.) The diligent discharge of the work of a deacon is not a due preparation for the office of the presbytery, but an hinderance of it; for it lies wholly in the providing and disposal of earthly things, in a serving of the tables of the church, and those private of the poor: but preparation for the ministry consists in a man's giving himself unto study, prayer, and meditation.

I shall only give my conjecture on the words; the apostle seems to me to have respect unto church-order, with decency therein, in both these expressions, 'shall purchase to themselves a good degree,' 'and great confidence in the faith:' *Βαθμὸς* is of the same signification with *Βαθμὶς*, which is a seat raised in an assembly to hear or speak. So saith the Schol. on Soph. Œd. *ὁ τόπος ἔνθα ἡ ἐκκλησία ἐγένετο, βαθμίσιν ἦν κύκλῳ διειλημμένος, ἄλλαις ἐπ' ἄλλαις· ἔνθα οἱ συνελθόντες πάντες καθήμενοι ἀνημποδίστως ἠκροῶντο τοῦ ἱσταμένου ἐν μέσῳ.* 'The place where the assembly (or church) met, was divided round about with seats in degrees, some above others, where all that met might without trouble hear him that stood in the midst as they sate.' And countenance is given hereunto by what is observed concerning the custom of sitting in the Jewish synagogues. So Ambrose; 'Tra-

ditio est Synagogæ, ut sedentes disputarent, seniores dignitate in cathedris, subsequentes in subselliis, novissimi in pavimento; 'It is the tradition or order of the synagougue, that the elders in dignity (or office) should discourse sitting in chairs; the next order on forms or benches, and the last on the floor.' So speaks Philo before him; εἰς ἱεροὺς ἀφικνούμενοι τόπους καθ' ἡλικίας ἐν τάξεσιν ὑπὸ πρεσβυτέροις νεοὶ καθίζιονται, 'when we meet in sacred places,' places of divine worship, 'the younger sort according to their quality sit in orders under the elders.' And this James the apostle hath respect unto in the primitive assemblies of the Christian Jews. For reproving their partiality in accepting of men's persons, preferring the rich immoderately before the poor, he instanceth in their disposing of them unto seats in their assemblies. 'They said unto the rich man, σὺ κάθου ὧδε καλῶς, sit thou here in a good place;' that is, in βάθμῳ καλῷ, 'in the best degree;' and to the poor, 'stand thou there' on the floor, or 'sit at my footstool,' without respect unto those other qualifications whereby they were to be distinguished. Wherefore the apostle having respect unto church assemblies, and the order to be observed in them, the καλὸς βαθμὸς here intended, may signify no more but a place of some eminency in the church assemblies, which is due unto such deacons, where with boldness and confidence they may assist in the management of the affairs of the church, which belongs unto the profession of the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

If any shall rather think that both of the expressions do signify an increase in gifts and grace, which is a certain consequence of men's faithful discharge of their office in the church, wherein many deacons of old were eminent unto martyrdom, I shall not contend against it.

2. Whereas there are qualifications expressly required in the wives of deacons, as that they should be 'grave, not slanderous, sober, faithful in all things;' 1 Tim. iii. 12. which is to be considered before their call to office; supposing that any of them do fall from the faith, as becoming Papists, Socinians, or Quakers, whether their husbands may be continued in their office?

Answer 1. He who in his own person faithfully dischargeth his office, may be continued therein, yea, though his wife

should be actually excommunicated out of the church. 'Every one of us must give an account of himself unto the Lord.' He rejects us not for what we cannot remedy. The sinning person shall bear his own judgment. 2. Such an one ought to take care, by virtue of his authority as a husband, that as little offence as possible may be given to the church by his wife, when she loseth the qualification of not being a slanderer, which is inseparable from such apostates.

3. May a deacon be dismissed from his office wholly, after he hath been solemnly set apart unto it by prayer?

Ans. 1. The very end of the office being only the convenience of the church and its accommodation, the continuation of men in this office is to be regulated by them. And if the church at any time stand not in need of the ministry of this or that person, they may, upon his desire, discharge him of his office. 2. Things may so fall out with men, as unto their outward circumstances, with respect unto either their persons in bodily distempers and infirmities, or their condition in the world, as that they are not able any longer to attend unto the due discharge of this office; in which case they ought to be released. 3. A man may be solemnly set apart unto a work and duty by prayer, for a limited season, suppose for a year only; wherefore this doth not hinder but that a man on just reasons may be dismissed at any time from his office, though he be so set apart unto it. 4. A deacon, by unfaithfulness and other offences, may forfeit his office, and be justly excluded from it, losing all his right unto it, and interest in it, and therefore on just reasons may be dismissed wholly from it. 5. For any one to desert his office through forwardness, covetousness, sloth, or negligence, is an offence and scandal which the church ought to take notice of. 6. He who desires a dismission from his office, ought to give an account of his desires and the reasons of them unto the church, that the ministry which he held may be duly supplied, and love continued between him and the church.

4. How many deacons may there be in one congregation?

Ans. As many as they stand in need of, for the ends of that ministry; and they may be at all times increased, as the state of the church doth require; and it is meet that there should always be so many, as that none of the poor be

neglected in the daily ministration, nor the work be made burdensome unto themselves.

5. What is the duty of the deacons towards the elders of the church?

Ans. Whereas the care of the whole church in all its concernments is principally committed unto the pastors, teachers, and elders, it is the duty of the deacons in the discharge of their office; 1. To acquaint them from time to time with the state of the church, and especially of the poor, so far as it falls under their inspection. 2. To seek and take their advice in matters of greater importance relating unto their office. 3. To be assisting unto them in all the outward concerns of the church.

6. May deacons preach the word and baptize authoritatively by virtue of their office?

Ans. 1. The deacons, whose office is instituted, Acts vi. and whose qualifications are fixed, 1 Tim. iii. have no call unto, or ministerial power in these things. The limitation of their office, work, and power, is so express, as will not admit of any debate. (2.) Persons once called unto this office, might of old in an extraordinary manner, may at present in an ordinary way, be called unto the preaching of the word; but they were not then, they cannot be now, authorized thereunto by virtue of this office. 3. If a new office be erected under the name of deacons, it is in the will of them by whom it is erected, to assign what power unto it they please.

CHAP. X.

Of Excommunication.

THE power of the church towards its members (for it hath nothing to do with them that are without) may be referred unto three heads: 1. The admission of members into its society. 2. The rule and edification of them that belong unto it. 3. The exclusion out of its society of such as obstinately refuse to live and walk according unto the laws and rules of it. And these things belong essentially and

inseparably unto every free society, and are comprehensive of all church power whatever.

The second of these hath been treated of in the discourse concerning church offices and rule. And all that belongs unto the first of them, is fully declared in the chapters of the essential constituent parts of gospel churches, namely their matter and form. The third must be now spoken, unto which is the power of excommunication.

There is nothing in Christian religion, about which the contest of opinions hath been more fierce than this of excommunication, most of them proceeding evidently from false presumptions and secular interests. And no greater instance can be given of what the serpentine wits of men, engaged by the desire of domination and wealth, and assisted by opportunities, may attain unto. For whereas, as we shall see immediately, there is nothing more plain, simple, and more exposed unto the common understanding of all Christians, yea of all mankind, than is this institution of Christ; both as under its nature, form, and manner of administration, nothing more wholesome nor useful unto the souls of men; nothing more remote from giving the least disturbance or prejudice to civil society, to magistrates or rulers, unto the personal or political rights or concernments of any one individual in the world: it hath been metamorphosed into an hideous monster; an engine of priestly domination and tyranny, for the deposition or assassination of kings and princes, the wasting of nations with bloody wars, the terror of the souls of men, and the destruction of their lives, with all their earthly concerns, unto the erection of a tyrannical empire, no less pernicious unto the Christian world, than those of the Saracens or the Turks. He is a stranger unto all that hath passed in the world for near a thousand years, who knows not the truth of these things. And to this very day, the greatest part of them that are called Christians, are so supinely ignorant and doating, or so infatuated and blinded by their prejudices and corrupt interests, as to suppose, or to say, that if the pope of Rome do excommunicate kings or princes, they may be lawfully deposed from their rule, and in some cases killed; and that other persons being rightly excommunicated, according unto certain laws, rules, and processes, that some have framed,

ought to be fined, punished, imprisoned, and so destroyed. And about these things there are many disputes and contests; when if men were awakened out of their lethargy they would be laughed at, as the most ridiculous and contemptible mormos that ever appeared in the world; though they are no laughing matter at present unto them that are concerned in them.

Supposing then ecclesiastical excommunication (as I at present suppose, and shall immediately prove it) to be an appointment of our Lord Jesus Christ; these things are plain and evident concerning it, not capable of any modest contradiction. 1. That there is no divine evangelical institution, that is more suited unto the light of nature, the rules of common equity, and principles of unseared consciences, as unto the nature, efficacy, and rule of it, than this is. 2. That the way of the administration and exercise of the power and acts of it, is so determined, described, and limited in the Scripture, and the light of nature, as that there can be no gross error or mistake about it, but what proceeds from secular interests, pride, ambition, covetousness, or other vicious habits and inclinations of the minds of men. 3. That the whole authority of it, its sentence, power, and efficacy, are merely spiritual, with respect unto the souls and consciences of men only; and that to extend it directly or indirectly, immediately or by consequences, unto the temporal hurt, evil or damage of any in their lives, liberties, estates, natural or legal privileges, is opposite unto, and destructive of, the whole government of Christ in and over his church. All these things will fully appear in the account which we shall give of it.

It is therefore evident, as was intimated, that nothing in Christian practice hath been, or is more abused, corrupted, or perverted, than this of excommunication hath been and is. The residence of the supreme power of it to be exercised towards and over all Christians, rulers, and subjects in the pope of Rome, or in other single persons absolutely, over less or greater distributions of them; the administration of it by citations, processes, pleadings, and contentions in wrangling law courts, according unto arbitrary canons and constitutions, whose original is either known or unknown; the application of it unto the hurt, damage, evil, or loss of

men in their temporal concerns, are utterly and openly foreign unto the gospel, and expressly contrary unto what the Lord Christ hath appointed therein. It would require a whole volume to declare the horrible abuses that both in point of right, and in matter of fact, with the pernicious consequences that have ensued thereon, which the corruption of this divine institution hath produced: but to make a declaration hereof, doth not belong to my present design; besides, it hath in some good measure been done by others. In brief, it is so come to pass that it is made a mere political engine, of an external forcible government, of the persons of men, unto the ends of the interests of some, who have got a pretence of its power, administered by such ways and means, as wherein the consciences of men, neither of those by whom it is administered, nor of those unto whom it is applied, are any way concerned, with respect unto the authority, or any institution of Jesus Christ.

From an observation hereof, and a desire to vindicate as well Christian religion from such a scandalous abuse, as mankind from bondage to such a monstrous fiction as is the present power and exercise of it, some have fallen into another extreme, denying that there is any such thing as excommunication, appointed or approved by the gospel. But this neither is, nor ever will be a way to reduce religion nor any thing in it, unto its primitive order and purity. To deny the being of any thing because it hath been abused, when there could have been no abuse of it, but upon a supposition of its being, is not a rational way to reprove and convince that abuse. And when those who have corrupted this institution, find the insufficiency of the arguments produced to prove that there never was any such institution, it makes them secure in the practice of their own abuses of it. For they imagine that there is nothing incumbent on them to justify their present possession and exercise of the power of excommunication; but that excommunication itself is appointed in the church by Christ, whereas the true consideration of this appointment, is the only means to divest them of their power and practice. For the most effectual course to discharge and disprove all corruptions in the agenda or practicals of religion, as the sacraments, public worship, rule, and the like, is to propose and declare the things them-

selves in their original simplicity and purity, as appointed by Christ, and recorded in the Scriptures. A real view of them in such a proposal, will divest the minds of men, not corrupted and hardened by prejudice and interest, of those erroneous conceptions of them, that from some kind of tradition they have been prepossessed withal. And this I shall now attempt in this particular of excommunication.

There hath been great inquiry about the nature and exercise of this ordinance, under the Old Testament, with the account given of it by the latter Jews. For the right and power of it in general, belongs unto a church as such, every church, and not that which is purely evangelical only. This I shall not inquire into; it hath been sifted to the bran already, and intermixed with many rabbinical conjectures and mistakes. In general, there is nothing more certain, than that there was a double removal of persons by church-authority, from the communion of the whole congregation in divine worship. The one for a season, the other for ever; whereof I have given instances elsewhere. But I intend only the consideration of what belongs unto churches under the New Testament. And to this end we may observe,

1. That all lawful societies, constituted such by voluntary confederation, according unto peculiar laws and rules of their own choice, unto especial duties and ends, have a right and power by the light of nature, to receive into their society those that are willing and meet, engaging themselves to observe the rules, laws, and ends of the society; and to expel them out of it who wilfully deviate from those rules. This is the life and form of every lawful society or community of men in the world, without which they can neither coalesce nor subsist. But it is required hereunto,

1. That those who so enter into such a society, have right or power so to do. And many things are required unto this end: as, (1.) That those who enter into such a society be 'sui juris;' have a lawful right to dispose of themselves, as unto all the duties and ends of such a society. Hence children, servants, subjects, have no power in themselves to enter into such societies, without the interposition of and obligation from a power superior unto that of parents, masters, or princes, namely, that of God himself. (2.) That the rules,

laws, and ends of the society be lawful, good, and useful unto themselves and others. For there may be a confederation in and for evil; which is a combination that gives no right nor power over one another, or towards others that enter into it. (3.) That it contains nothing that is prejudicial unto others in things divine or human. (4.) Nor oblige unto the omission or neglect of any duty, that men by virtue of any relations, natural, moral, or political, do owe unto others. Nor, (5.) is hurtful unto themselves in their lives, liberties, names, reputation, usefulness in the world, or any thing else, unto whose preservation they are obliged by the law of nature. Nor, (6.) can be, or are such persons obliged to forsake the conduct of themselves in things divine and human, by the light of their own consciences, by an engagement of blind obedience unto others, which would render every society unlawful by the law of God and light of nature. (7.) Least of all, have any persons right or power to oblige themselves in such societies, unto things evil, sinful, superstitious, or idolatrous.

These things are plain and evident in themselves, and every way sufficient to divest all the religious societies and fraternities that are erected in the church of Rome, of all that right and power which belongs unto lawful societies, constituted by voluntary confederation. And if any thing inconsistent with these principles of natural light be pretended in churches, it divests them of all power, as to the exercise of it, by virtue of any compact or confederation whatever.

2. It is required that a society, by voluntary consent vested with the right and power mentioned, do neither give nor take away any right, privilege, or advantage, to, or from any members of the society which belong unto them naturally or politically; but their power is confined unto those things alone, wherein men may be benefited and advantaged by the society. And this is the foundation of all political societies. Men, for the sake and benefit of them, may and ought to forego many particular advantages, which, without them, they might make unto themselves. But they cannot forego any of those rights, which in their several relations are inseparably annexed unto them by the law of nature, nor give power over themselves in such things unto the society. So is it with churches; the power of expulsion out of their

society, extends only unto the benefits and advantages which the society, as such, doth afford and communicate. Now these are only things spiritual, if churches be an institution of him whose kingdom is not of this world. The power then that is in churches, by virtue of their being what they are, extends not itself unto any outward concernments of men, as unto their lives, liberties, natural or political privileges, estates or possessions; unless we shall say, that men hold and possess these things by virtue of their relation unto the church, which is to overthrow all natural and human right in the world. 'De facto,' men are now compelled whether they will or no, to be esteemed to be of this or that church, and to be dealt withal accordingly. But if they had not been divested of their natural liberty, they know not how, without their own consent, and should be taught, that by entering into a church, they must come under a new tenure of their lives, liberties, and estates, at the will of the lords of the society, according to the customs of their courts, there would not be so many wise men in churches, as now there are thought to be.

But this is the true state of things in the church of Rome, and among others also. Christians are esteemed to be of them, and belong unto them, whether they will or no. Immediately hereon all the rights, liberties, privileges, possessions which they enjoy by the law of God and nature, and by the just laws and constitutions of men in civil governments, under which they live, come to depend upon, and be subject unto, the especial laws and rules of the society which they are adjudged to belong unto. For upon expulsion out of that society by excommunication, according unto the laws and rules which it hath framed unto itself, all their rights and titles, and liberties and enjoyments, are forfeited and exposed to ruin. Some indeed do earnestly and learnedly contend that the pope of Rome hath not power to excommunicate sovereign kings and princes; and that if he do, they make no forfeiture of life or dignity thereby. And there are good reasons why they do so. But in the meantime, they deal with other poor men after the same manner. For if a poor man be excommunicated, immediately he loseth the free tenure of his life, liberty, and goods, by the law of the church and the land, and is committed to the jail without

bail or mainprize. So that by this artifice, all men hold their natural and civil rights, by the rules of the church society whereto they are supposed to belong. And as this utterly overthrows the foundation of all that property according to the laws of the land, which is so much talked of and valued; so indeed it would be destructive of all order and liberty, but that the church is wise enough not to employ this engine unto great men and men in power, who may yet deserve excommunication as well as some of their poor neighbours, if the gospel be thought to give the rule of it. But those that are poor, helpless, and friendless, shall in the pursuit of this excommunication be driven from their houses, cast into prisons, and kept there until they and their families starve and perish. And it is apparent that we are beholden unto the greatness, authority, and wealth of many, whom the ecclesiastical courts care not to conflict withal, that the whole nation is not actually brought under this new tenure of their lives, liberties, and estates, which on this presumption they are obnoxious unto.

And all this evil ariseth from the neglect and contempt of this fundamental rule of all societies, apparent unto all in the light of nature itself; namely, that they have no power in or over any thing, right, privilege, or advantage, but what men are made partakers of by virtue of such societies, their rule and laws whereunto they are obliged. But of this sort are not the lives, the liberties, the houses, and possessions of men, with respect unto the church. They receive them not from the church, and a man would certainly think, that the church could not take them away.

Yea, we live and subsist in order, upon the good nature and wisdom of men, who judge it best neither to exert their power, nor act their principles in this matter. For, whereas they esteem all the inhabitants of the land to belong unto their church; if they should in the first place excommunicate all that ought to be excommunicated by the rule and law of the gospel, and then all that ought to be so, according to their own laws and canons, both which a man would think they were obliged in point of conscience unto; and in pursuit of their sentenee, send out the 'capias' for them all, I very much question whether any of them would go to prison or no; and then in what a fine case would this govern-

ment be; and if they should all go to jail, I am persuaded the king would be in an ill state to defend his realms against his enemies.

3. Every society hath this power towards those who are incorporated in it by their own consent, and not towards others. For whence should they have such a power, or who should commit it unto them? Nor can any be cast out from those privileges which they never had an interest in, nor a right unto. The apostle's rule holds in this case, especially with respect unto churches; 'What have we to do to judge them that are without.' And as unto the exercise of this power, they are all to be esteemed to be without, who are not rightly incorporated into that particular church, by which they may be ejected out of it. A power of excommunication at random towards all that those who exercise it can extend force unto, hath no foundation either in the light of nature or authority of the Scripture. And it would be ridiculous in any corporation to disfranchise such as never belonged unto it, who were never members of it.

4. The only reason or cause for the expulsion of any person out of such a society, is a wilful deviation from the rules and laws of the society, whose observance he had engaged unto upon his entrance into it. Nothing else can be required unto the preservation of a man's interest in any right or privilege, but what he took upon himself to perform in his admittance into it. And if the great rule of every church society be, 'that men observe and do whatsoever the Lord Christ hath commanded,' none can be justly ejected out of that society, but upon a wilful disobedience unto his commands. And therefore the casting of men out of church-communion on light and trivial occasions, or for any reasons or causes whatever, but such as essentially belong unto the rules and laws whereon the church doth originally coalesce into a society, is contrary unto natural light, and the reason of the things themselves.

Thus far, I say, is every lawful confederate society enabled and warranted by the light of nature, to remove from its communion, and from a participation in its rights and privileges any of its number who will not walk according to the rules and principles of its coalescency and constitution. Whereas therefore the rule of the constitution of the church

is, That men walk together in holy obedience unto the commands of Christ, and the observance of all his institutions, without giving offence unto one another, or those that are without, by any sinful miscarriage, and do abide in the profession of the truth; if any one shall wilfully and obstinately transgress in any of these things, it is the right and duty, and in the power of the church to remove him from its society.

But this is not the entire nor the next immediate ground, reason, or warranty of ecclesiastical excommunication. For this natural equity will not extend itself unto cases that are in things spiritual and supernatural; nor will the actings of the church thereon reach unto the consciences of men, for the proper ends of excommunication. Wherefore it was necessary that it should have a peculiar institution in the church by the authority of Jesus Christ. For,

1. The church is such a society as no men have right or power either to enter into themselves, or to exclude others from, but by virtue of the authority of Christ. No warranty from the light of nature, or from the laws of men, or their own voluntary confederation, can enable any to constitute a church-society, unless they do all things expressly in obedience unto the authority of Christ. For his church is his kingdom, his house; which none can constitute or build but himself. Wherefore it is necessary, that the power of admission into, and exclusion from, the church, do arise from his grant and institution. Nor is it in the power of any men in the world, to admit into, or exclude from, this society but by virtue thereof.

2. Excommunication is an act of authority, as we shall see afterward. But no authority can be exercised in the church, towards any person whatever, but by virtue of the institution of Christ. For the authority itself, however ministerially exercised by others, is his alone; and he exerts it not, but in the ways of his own appointment. So in particular the apostle directs, that excommunication be exerted in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, in and by his authority; 1 Cor. v. 4.

3. The privileges from which men are excluded by excommunication are not such as they have any natural or civil right unto (as hath been proved), but merely such as are granted unto the church by Jesus Christ; and men can-

not by virtue of any agreement among themselves, without a warranty from him by his institution, expel others from the privileges which are merely of his grant and donation. He alone therefore hath given and granted this power unto the church, namely, of excluding any by the rules and ways of his appointment from the privileges of his grant, which is the peculiar power of excommunication inquired after.

4. There is such an efficacy assigned unto excommunication in binding the consciences of men, in retaining their sins, in the destruction or mortification of the flesh, in the healing and recovery of sinners; as nothing but the authority of a divine institution can give unto it. By virtue of natural light and mutual consent, men may free themselves from the company and society of those who will not walk with them according to rules of communion agreed upon among them; but they cannot reach the minds and consciences of others with any of these effects.

5. That excommunication is an express ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ in his churches is fully declared in the Scripture. For,

1. The power of it is contained in the authority given by Christ unto the church, under the name of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. For the power expressed therein is not merely doctrinal and declarative as is the preaching of the gospel, the consequent whereof upon the faith or unbelief of them that hear it, is the remitting or retaining of their sin in heaven and earth; but it is disciplinary also, as it is appropriated unto the house whose keys are committed unto the stewards of it. And seeing the design of Christ was to have his church holy, unblamable, and without offence in the world, that therein he might make a representation of his own holiness, and the holiness of his rule; and whereas those of whom it is constituted, are liable and subject unto sins scandalous and offensive, reflecting dishonour on himself and the church, in being the occasion of sinning unto others; that design would not have been accomplished, had he not given this authority unto his church to cast out and separate from itself all that do by their sins so give offence. And the neglect of the exercise of this authority in a due manner, was the principal means whereby the glory, honour, and usefulness of the churches in the world, were at length utterly lost.

2. It hath a direct institution, Matt. xviii. 15—20. 'If thy brother shall trespass, &c. tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven,' &c. After all the learned and unlearned contests that have been about this place, the sense of it is plain and obvious, unto such as whose minds are not clouded with prejudices about such churches and such excommunications as are utterly foreign unto the Scripture. But that by 'trespasses' in this place, sins against God, giving scandal or offence, are intended, hath been proved before; as also, that by a church, a particular Christian congregation is intended. This church hath the cognizance of the scandalous offences of its members committed unto it, when brought before it in the due order described. Hereon it makes a determination, designing in the first place the recovery of the person offending, from his sin, by his hearing of its counsel and advice. But in case of obstinacy, it is to remove him from its communion, leaving him in the outward condition of a heathen and a publican. So is he to be esteemed by them that were offended with his sin, and that because of the authority of the church binding him in heaven and earth unto the punishment due unto his sin, unless he doth repent. The rejection of an offending brother out of the society of the church, leaving him as unto all the privileges of the church, in the state of a heathen, declaring him liable unto the displeasure of Christ and everlasting punishment without repentance, is the excommunication we plead for; and the power of it, with its exercise, is plainly here granted by Christ and ordained in the church.

3. According unto this institution was the practice of the apostle, whereof we have several instances. I might insist on the excommunication of Simon the magician, a baptized professor, by Peter, who declared him 'to have neither part or lot in the church,' upon the discovery of his wickedness; Acts viii. 13. 20—23. Yet because it was the single act of one apostle, and so may be esteemed extraordinary, I shall omit it. However, that fact of the apostle is sufficiently declarative of what is to be done in the church in like cases, and which if it be not done, it cannot

be preserved in its purity according unto the mind of Christ. But that which was directed by the apostle Paul in the church of Corinth towards the incestuous person, is express; 1 Cor. v. 1, 2. 5—7. (1.) He declares the sin whereof the person charged was guilty, with the ignominy and scandal of it; ver. 1. (2.) He blames the church that they had not been affected with the guilt and scandal of it, so as to have proceeded to his removal or expulsion out of the church, that he might be taken away or cut off from them; ver. 2. (3.) He declares his own judgment in the case, that he ought to be so taken away or removed, which yet was not actually effected by that judgment and sentence of his; ver. 3. (4.) He declares the causes of this excision. [1.] The supreme efficient cause of it, is the power or authority of the Lord Jesus Christ instituting this ordinance in his church, giving right and power unto it for its administration, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with his power. [2.] The declarative cause of the equity of this sentence, which was the spirit of the apostle, or the authoritative declaration of his judgment in the case, 'with my spirit.' [3.] The instrumental ministerial cause of it, which is the church; do it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'when you are gathered together;' ver. 4. and thereby 'purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump;' ver. 7. whence the punishment of this sentence is said to be 'inflicted by many;' 2 Cor. ii. 6. that is, all those who on his repentance were obliged to forgive and comfort him, that is, the whole church; ver. 7. (5.) The nature of the sentence is the 'delivering of such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus;' ver 5. Not the destruction of his body by death, but through 'the mortification of the flesh,' whereby he was shortly afterward recovered and restored into his former condition. The whole of what we plead for, is here exemplified; as, (1.) The cause of excommunication, which is a scandalous sin unrepented of. (2.) The preparation for its execution, which is the church's sense of the sin and scandal, with humiliation for it. (3.) The warranty of it, which is the institution of Christ, wherein his authority is engaged. (4.) The manner and form of it, by an act of authority with the consent of the whole church. (5.) The effect of it in a total separation from the privileges of the church. (6.) The end of it. [1.] With re-

spect unto the church; its purging and vindication. [2.] With respect unto the person excommunicated; his repentance, reformation, and salvation.

It is usually replied hereunto, that this was an extraordinary act of apostolical power, and so not to be drawn by us into example. For he himself both determines the case, and asserteth his presence in spirit, that is, by his authority, to be necessary unto what was done. Besides, it was a delivery of the man to Satan, that is, into his power to be afflicted and cruciated by him, to be terrified in his mind, and punished in his body to the destruction of the flesh, that is unto death. Such was the delivery of a man to Satan by the apostle mentioned here, and 1 Tim. i. 9. 20. in the judgment of many of the ancients. But there is no such power in any church at present to deliver an offender unto Satan nor any appearing effects of such a pretence. Wherefore, this is a matter which belongs not unto churches at present.

I answer, 1. What the apostles did in any church, whether present or absent, by their own authority, did not prejudice the right of the churches themselves, nor their power acted in subordination unto them and their guidance. So it is evident in this place, that notwithstanding the exerting of any apostolical power intimated, the church itself is charged with its duty, and directed to exercise its authority in the rejection of the offender. 2. There is nothing extraordinary in the case. (1.) It is not so that a member of a church should fall into a scandalous sin, unto the dishonour of Christ and the church, giving offence unto persons of all sorts (2.) It is an ordinary rule, founded in the light of nature, confirmed here and elsewhere by express divine commands, that such a one be rejected from the society and communion of the church, until he give satisfaction by repentance and reformation. (3.) It is that without which the church cannot be preserved in its purity, nor its being be continued, as both reason and experience do manifest. (4.) The judgment both of the fact and right was left unto the church itself, whence it was afterward highly commended by the apostle for the diligent discharge of its duty herein, 2 Cor. ii. In brief, it is such a divine order that is here prescribed, as without the observance whereof, no church can long subsist. (5.) There is no difficulty in the other part of

the objection, about the delivery unto Satan. For, (1.) It cannot be proved, that hereon the offender was delivered so into the power of Satan to be cruciated, agitated, and at length killed, as some imagine; nor can any instance of any such thing, be given in the Scripture or antiquity; though there be many of them, who upon their rejection out of the church, were enraged unto an opposition against it, as it was with Simon Magus, Marcion, and others. (2.) Yea, it is evident that there was no such thing included in their delivery unto Satan, as is pretended. For the design and end of it was the man's humiliation, recovery, and salvation, as is expressly affirmed in the text; and this effect it actually had, for the man was healed and restored. Wherefore, this delivery unto Satan, is an ordinance of Christ for the exciting of saving grace in the souls of men, adapted unto the case of falling by scandalous sins, peculiarly effectual above any other gospel ordinance. Now this cannot be such a delivery unto Satan, as that pretended, which can have no other end but destruction and death. (3.) This delivery unto Satan is no more but the casting of a man out of the visible kingdom of Christ, so giving him up as unto his outward condition into the state of heathens and publicans which belonged unto the kingdom of Satan. For he, who by the authority of Christ himself, according unto his law and institution, is not only debarred from a participation of all the privileges of the gospel, but also visibly and regularly divested of all present right to them and interest in them; he belongs unto the visible kingdom of Satan. The gathering of men by conversion into the church, is the 'turning of them from the power of Satan unto God,' Acts xxvi. 18. a 'delivery from the power of darkness,' that is, the kingdom of Satan, and a translation unto the kingdom of Christ; Col. i. 13. Wherefore, after a man hath by faith, and his conjunction unto a visible church, been translated into the kingdom of Christ, his just rejection out of it, is the re-delivery of him into the visible kingdom of Satan, which is all that is here intended. And this is an act suited unto the end whereunto it is designed. For a man hereby is not taken out of his own power and the conduct of his own mind, not acted or agitated by the devil, but is left unto the sedate consideration of his present state and condition. And this,

if t hee be any spark of ingenuous grace left in him, will be effectually operative, by shame, grief, and fear, unto his humiliation, especially understanding that the design of Christ and his church herein, is only his repentance and restoration.

Here is therefore, in this instance, an everlasting rule given unto the church in all ages, the ordinary occurrences of the like cases requiring an ordinary power for relief in them, without which the church cannot be preserved. That it is the duty of the church, enjoined unto it by the Lord Jesus Christ, and that necessary unto its glory, its own honour and edification, to reject scandalous offenders out of its communion, is evidently declared in this place: and to suppose that to be the duty of the church, which it hath no power or authority to discharge (seeing without them it cannot be discharged), is a wild imagination.

4. The duty of the church herein, with such other particular duties as suppose the institution hereof, are in many places directed and enjoined. It is so in that insisted on, 1 Cor. v. The foundation of the whole discourse and practice of the apostle there recorded lies in this, that churches ought to cut off from among them scandalous offenders; and that to the end they may preserve themselves pure; and that this they ought to do in the name of Christ, and by virtue of his authority, ver. 2. 4. 7. And this is the whole of that excommunication which we plead for. The manner of its administration we shall consider afterward, 2 Cor. ii. 6—8. The apostle commends the church for what they had done in the excommunication of the incestuous person, calling it a punishment, inflicted on him by them, ver. 6. He gives also an account of the effect of this sentence against him, which was his humiliation and repentance, ver. 7. And hereon gives direction for his restoration, by an act of the church forgiving him, and confirming their love unto him. Men may fancy to themselves strange notions of excommunication, with reference unto its power, the residence of that power, its effects, extent, and ends; and so either on the one hand erect it into an engine of arbitrary domination over the church and all the members of it; or deny on the other, that there is any such institution of Christ in force in his churches. But we can be taught nothing more plainly of the mind of Christ, than that he hath given power unto

his church to cast out of their communion obstinate scandalous offenders, and to restore them again upon their repentance, enjoining it unto them as their duty. And it is an evidence of a woful degeneracy in churches, from their primitive institution, when the sentence is so administered, as that it hath an effect, by virtue of human laws, or the outward concerns of men, but no influence on their consciences unto humiliation and repentance, which is the principal end of its appointment. The apostle treats of the same matter, Gal. v. 7—12. He speaks of those false teachers who opposed and overthrew what lay in them, the fundamental doctrine of the gospel. These at that time were in great power and reputation in the churches of the Galatians whom they had corrupted with their false opinions; so as that the apostle doth not directly enjoin their immediate excision; yet he declares what they did deserve, and what was the duty of the church towards them, when freed from their delusions, ver. 12. 'I would they were even cut off that trouble you.' Men have exercised their minds in curious conjectures about the sense of these words, altogether in vain and needlessly. The curiosity of some of the best of the ancients, applying it unto a forcible eunuchism is extremely fond. No other excision is intended, but that which was from the church, and to be done by the church in obedience unto the truth. Neither the subject matter treated of, the nature of the crime condemned, nor the state of the church, or design of the apostle, will admit of any other exposition. 2 Thess. iii. 7. The apostle gives command unto the brethren of the church, and that in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly. What it is to walk disorderly he declares immediately, namely, to live in an open disobedience unto any of the commands of Christ, not after the tradition which he received of us, that is, the doctrine of the gospel which he had delivered unto them. This withdrawing is as unto church communion, which cannot be done but upon some act of the church, depriving them of the rights of it. For if every member of the church should be left unto his own judgment and practice herein, it would bring all things into confusion. And therefore, ver. 14. he requires that a note be set on such a person by the church, that is, a sentence be denounced against him, before the duty

of withdrawing from him by the brethren be incumbent on them. See to the same purpose, Tit. iii. 10, 11. 1 Tim. v. 20. Rev. ii. 2. 14, 15. 20, 21.

It is therefore evident that this censure, judgment, spiritual punishment, is an institution of Christ, for whose administration he hath given authority unto his church, as that which is necessary unto its edification, with its preservation in honour, purity, and order.

There have been many disputes about it, as unto its order and kinds. Some suppose that there are two sorts of excommunication; the one they call the lesser, and the other the greater: some three sorts, as it is supposed there were among the Jews. There is no mention in the Scripture of any more sorts but one, or of any degrees herein. A segregation from all participation in church-order, worship, and privileges, is the only excommunication spoken of in the Scripture. But whereas an offending person may cause great disorder in a church, and give great scandal unto the members of it, before he can be regularly cut off or expelled the society; some do judge that there should a suspension of him from the Lord's table at least, precede total or complete excommunication in case of impenitency. And it ought in some cases so to be. But this suspension is not properly an especial institution; but only an act of prudence in church-rule to avoid offence and scandal. And no men question but that this is lawful unto, yea, the duty of the rulers of the church, to require any one to forbear for a season from the use of their privilege in the participation of the supper of the Lord, in case of scandal and offence which would be taken at it, and ensue thereon. And if any person shall refuse a submission unto them in this act of rule, the church hath no way for its relief, but to proceed unto the total removal of such a person from their whole communion. For the edification of the whole church must not be obstructed by the refractoriness of any one among them.

This excommunication, as we have proved before, is an act of church-authority, exerted in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And if so, then it is an act of the officers of the church, namely, so far as it is authoritative; for there is no authority in the church properly so called, but what re-

sides in the officers of it. There is an office in the church, which is merely ministerial, without any formal authority, that is of the deacons. But there is no authority in exercise, but what is in the elders and rulers of the church. And there are two reasons, which prove that the power of excommunication, as to the authoritative exercise of it, is in the elders of the church. 1. Because the apostles, by virtue of their office-power in every church, did join in the authoritative excommunication, as is plain in the case insisted on, 1 Cor. v. And there is no office-power now remaining, but what is in the elders of the church. 2. It is an act of rule. But all rule, properly so called, is in the hands of rulers only. We may add hereunto, that the care of the preservation of the church in its purity, of the vindication of its honour, of the edification of all its members, of the correction and salvation of offenders, is principally incumbent on them, or committed unto them as we have declared; as also, that they are best able to judge when and for what the sentence ought to be denounced against any, which requires their best skill in the wisdom of spiritual rule. And therefore the omission of the exercise of it, when it was necessary, is charged as a neglect on the angels or rulers of the churches, as the due execution of it is commended in them. And therefore unto them it doth belong with respect unto their office, and is thereon an office-act, or an act of authority.

Howbeit, it cannot be denied, but that the interest, yea, the power of the whole church in the fraternity of it, is greatly to be considered herein. For indeed, wherever the apostle treats of it, he doth not any where recommend it unto the officers of the church in a peculiar manner, but unto the whole church and the brethren therein. This is evident in the places before quoted. Wherefore the whole church is concerned herein, both in point of duty, interest, and power. 1. In point of duty; for by virtue of the mutual watch of all the members of the church over each other, and of the care incumbent on every one of them, for the good, the honour, the reputation, and edification of the whole, it is their duty jointly and severally to endeavour the purging out from among them of every thing that is contrary unto those ends. And they who are not concerned in these things, are dead

and useless members of the church. 2. In interest, they have also a concernment therein. They are to look that no root of bitterness spring up amongst them, lest themselves are at length defiled thereby. It is usually said, that the good are not defiled by holding communion with them that are wicked in a participation of holy ordinances. And there is some truth in what is said, with reference unto wicked undiscovered hypocrites; or such as are not scandalously flagitious: but to promote this persuasion, so as to beget an opinion in church-members, that they are no way concerned in the scandalous sins and lives of those with whom they walk in all duties of spiritual communion, openly avowing themselves members of the same body with them, is a diabolical engine invented to countenance churches in horrible security unto their ruin. But yet, besides that defilement which may be contracted in a joint participation of the same ordinances with such persons; there are other ways almost innumerable, whereby their example, if passed by without animadversion, may be pernicious unto their faith, love, and obedience. Wherefore they are obliged in point of spiritual interest, as they take care of their own souls, to concur in the ejection out of the church, of obstinate offenders. 3. In point of power. For the execution of this sentence is committed unto and rests in the body of the church. According as they concur and practise, so it is put in execution or suspended; for it is they who must withdraw communion from them, or the sentence is of no use or validity; this punishment must be inflicted by the many, who also are to restore him who is so rebuked. Wherefore, excommunication, without the consent of the church, is a mere nullity.

But if any one shall say, that excommunication is not an act of authority nor of office, but of power residing in the community resulting from their common suffrage, guided and directed by the officers or elders of the church, I shall again take up this inquiry immediately, and speak unto it more distinctly; lest what is here spoken should not be sufficiently unto the satisfaction of any.

Our next inquiry is concerning the object of this church censure; or who they are that ought to be excommunicated. And,

1. They must be members of that church, by which the

sentence is to be denounced against them. And this, as we have proved before, they cannot be without their own consent. One church cannot excommunicate the members of another. They are unto them as unto this matter 'without,' and they have no power to judge them. The foundation of the right to proceed against any herein, is in their own voluntary engagement to observe and keep the rules and laws of the society whereunto they are admitted. The offence is given unto that church in the first place, if not only. And it is an act of the church for its own edification. And there is a nullity in the sentence which is ordained, decreed, or denounced by any who are not officers of that church in particular, wherein the sin is committed.

2. These church-members that may be justly excommunicated, are of two sorts.

1. Such as continue obstinate in the practice of any scandalous sin, after private and public admonition. The process from the first offence in admonition, is so stated in ordinary cases, Matt. xviii. that there is no need farther to declare it. The time that is to be allotted unto the several degrees of it, shall be spoken unto afterward. And unto a right judgment of obstinacy in any scandalous sin, it is required, (1.) That the sin considered in itself be such, as is owned to be such, by all, without doubting, dispute, or hesitation. It must be some sin that is judged and condemned in the light of nature, or in the express testimony of Scripture; yea, such as the Holy Ghost witnesseth, that continued in without repentance, it is inconsistent with salvation. If the thing itself, to be animadverted on, be dubious or disputable whether it be a sin or no, especially such a sin, either from the nature of the fact, or the qualifications of the person offending, or from other circumstances, so as that the guilty person is not self-condemned, nor are others fully satisfied in their minds about the nature of it, there is no room for excommunication in such cases. And if it be once allowed to be applied towards any sins, but such as are evident to be so (as the apostle says, the works of 'the flesh are manifest') in the light of nature, and express testimony of Scripture, not only will the administration of it be made difficult, a matter of dispute unfit for the determination of the body of the church, but it will leave it unto the wills of men to prosti-

tute unto litigious brawls, quarrels, and differences, wherein interest and partiality may take place; which is to profane this divine institution. But confine it, as it ought to be, unto such sins as are condemned in the light of nature, or by express testimony of Scripture, as inconsistent with salvation by Jesus Christ, if persisted in, and all things that belong unto the administration of it, will be plain and easy.

From the neglect of this rule proceeded that horrible confusion and disorder in excommunication and the administration of it, which for sundry ages prevailed in the world. For as it was mostly applied unto things holy, just, and good, or the performance of such gospel duties as men owed to Christ, and their own souls; so being exercised with respect unto irregularities, that are made such, merely by the arbitrary constitutions and laws of men, and that in cases frivolous, trifling, and of no importance, it was found necessary to be managed in and by such courts, such processes, such forms of law, such pleadings and intricacies of craft, such a burden of cost and charge, as is uncertain whether it ought to be more bewailed or derided.

(2.) It is required hereunto, that the matter of fact, as unto the relation of the sin unto the particular offender, be confessed, or not denied, or clearly proved. How far this is to extend, and what ground of procedure there may be in reports or fame concurring with leading circumstances, we shall inquire afterward. And although in such cases of public fame, a good testimony from those of credit and repute in the church given unto the supposed guilty person, is of use, and sufficient in some cases, singly to oppose unto public reports; yet to require a man to purge himself by others, from any feigned scandalous imputation, is an unwarrantable tyranny.

(3.) It is also required, that the previous process in and by private and public admonition, and that repeated with patient waiting for the success of each of them, be duly premised. Whether this extend itself unto all causes of excommunication, shall be afterward inquired into. Ordinarily it is so necessary unto the conviction of the mind and conscience of the offender, and to leave him without either provocation from the church, or excuse in himself, so suited to be expressive of the grace and patience of Christ toward

sinners, so requisite unto the satisfaction of the church itself in their procedure, as that the omission of it will probably render the sentence useless and ineffectual. A crying out, 'I admonish a first, a second, a third time,' and so to excommunication, is a very absurd observation of a divine institution.

(4.) It is required, that the case of the person to be censured, as unto his profession of repentance on the one hand, or obstinacy on the other, be judged and determined by the whole church in love and compassion. There are few who are so profligately wicked, but that, when the sin wherewith they are charged, is evidently such in the light of nature and Scripture, and when it is justly proved against them, they will make some profession of sorrow and repentance. Whether this be sufficient, as in most cases it is, to suspend the present proceeding of the church, or quite to lay it aside, is left unto the judgment of the church itself, upon consideration of present circumstances, and what is necessary unto its own edification. Only this rule must be continually observed, that the least appearance of haste or undue precipitation herein, is to be avoided in all these cases, as the bane of church-rule and order.

Again, the manner of its administration, according to the mind of Christ, may be considered. And hereunto are required, (1.) Prayer, without which it can no way be administered in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The administration of any solemn ordinance of the gospel, without prayer, is a horrible profanation of it. And the neglect or contempt hereof, in any who take upon them to excommunicate others, is an open proclamation of the nullity of their act and sentence. And the observation of the administration of it without any due reverence of God, without solemn invocation of the name of Christ, thereby engaging his presence and authority in what they do, is that principally which hath set the consciences of all mankind at liberty from any concernment in this ecclesiastical censure; and whence those that administer it expect no other success of what they do, but what they can give it by outward force. And where this fails, excommunication is quickly laid aside. As it was when the pope threatened the cantons of the Swissers, that if they complied not with some of his impositions, he would excom-

municate them; whereon they sent him word they would not be excommunicated, which ended the matter. Wherefore, when our Lord Jesus Christ gives unto his church the power of binding and loosing, directing them in the exercise of that power, he directs them to ask assistance by prayer, when they are gathered together; Matt. xviii. 18—20. And the apostle directs the church of Corinth, that they should proceed unto this sentence when they were gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; 1 Cor. v. 4. which could not be without calling on his name. In brief, without prayer, neither is the ordinance itself sanctified unto the church, nor are any meet to administer it, nor is the authority of Christ either owned or engaged, nor divine assistance attained; neither is what is done any more excommunication than any rash curse is, so that many proceed inordinately out of the mouths of men.

And the prayer required herein is of three sorts. [1.] That which is previous for guidance and direction in a matter of so great weight and importance. It is no small thing to fall into mistakes, when men act in the name of Christ, and so engage his authority in what he will not own. And the best of men, the best of churches, are liable unto such mistakes, where they are not under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which is to be obtained by prayer only. [2.] In, or together with the administration of it; that what is done on earth may be ratified in heaven, by the approbation of Christ, and be made effectual unto its proper end. [3.] It must be followed with the prayer of the church unto the same purpose; all with respect unto the humiliation, repentance, healing, and recovery of the offender.

(2.) It is to be accompanied with lamentation or mourning. So the apostle, reproving the church of Corinth for the omission of it when it was necessary, tells them, that 'they had not mourned; that the offender might be taken away from among them;' 1 Cor. v. 2. It is not to be done without mourning: and himself calls the execution of this sentence from this adjunct, his bewailing of them. 'I shall bewail many that have sinned already,' 2 Cor. xii. 2. Compassion for the person offending, with respect unto that dangerous condition whereinto he hath cast himself; the excision of a member of the same body with whom they have had com-

munion in the most holy mysteries of divine worship, and sat down at the table of the Lord, with a due sense of the dishonour of the gospel by his fall, ought to ingenerate this mourning or lamentation in the minds of them who are concerned in the execution of the sentence. Nor is it advisable for any church to proceed thereunto, before they are so affected.

(3.) It is to be accompanied with a due sense of the future judgment of Christ. For we herein judge for Christ, in the matters of his house and kingdom. And woe to them who dare pronounce this sentence without a persuasion on good grounds, that it is the sentence of Christ himself. And there is a representation also in it of the future judgment, when Christ will eternally cut off and separate from himself all hypocrites and impenitent sinners. This is well expressed by Tertullian, 'Ibidem etiam exhortationes, castigationes et censura divina (speaking of the assemblies of the church) nam et judicatur magno cum pondere, ut apud certos de Dei conspectu; summumque futuri judicii præjudicium est, si quis ita deliquerit ut a communicatione orationis et conventus, et omnis sancti commercii relegetur,' Apol. cap. 39. Were this duty observed, it would be a preservative against that intermixture of corrupt affections, and corrupt ends, which often impose themselves on the minds of men, in the exercise of this power.

Lastly, The nature and end of this judgment or sentence being corrective, not vindicative; for healing, not destruction, what is the duty of the church, and those principally concerned in the pursuit of it to render it effectual, is plainly evident. Of what use a 'significavit' and 'capias' may be in this case I know not; they belong not unto Christian religion; much less do fire and fagot do so. Prayer for the person cut off; admonition as occasion is offered; compassion in his distressed estate, which is so much the more deplorable, if he know it not; forbearance from common converse, with readiness for the restoration of love, in all the fruits of it, contain the principal duties of the church, and all the members of it towards them that are justly excommunicate.

What farther belongeth unto this head of church-rule or order shall be spoken unto in the resolution of some cases

or inquiries, wherein also some things only mentioned already, shall be more fully explained.

I have made some inquiry before, whether excommunication be an act of authority and jurisdiction in the officers of the church, or an act of power in the fraternity of the church. But for the sake of some by whom it is desired, I shall a little more distinctly inquire after the truth herein; though I shall alter nothing of what was before laid down. And,

1. It is certain, it hath been proved, and I now take it for granted, that the Lord Christ hath given this power unto the church. Wherefore in the exercise of this power, both the officers and members of the church are to act according unto their respective interests. For that exercise of power in the church towards any, which is not an act of obedience unto Christ, in them that exercise it, it is in itself null. There is therefore no distinction or distribution of power in the church, but by the interposition of especial duty.

2. The institution of Christ, with respect unto a church as it is a peculiar society for its especial ends, doth not deprive it of its natural right, as it is a society. There is in every community, by voluntary confederation, a natural right and power to expel those from its society, who will not be ruled by the laws of its constitution. And if the church should, by the institution of a power, new as unto the way, manner, and ends of its exercise, be deprived of its original, radical power, with respect unto the general end of its own preservation, it would not be a gainer by that institution. It may be easily understood, that the Lord Christ should in particular appoint the way and manner of the exercise of this power or administration of this sentence, committing the care thereof unto the officers of the church. But it cannot be well understood, that thereby he should deprive the church of its right, and forbid them their duty in preserving their society entire and pure. Neither can it be so in an especial manner committed unto any, as that upon their neglect, whereby those who by the law and rule of Christ, ought to be cast out of the church's communion, are continued in it unto its sin and defilement, the church itself should be free from guilt. Wherefore the apostle expressly chargeth the whole church of Corinth with sin and neglect of duty, in that

the incestuous person was not put away from among them: this could not be, if so be the power of it were so in the hands of a few of the officers, that the church had no right to act in it. For none can incur a guilt merely by the defect of others in discharge of their duty.

3. The church essentially considered is before its ordinary officers; for the apostle 'ordained officers in every church.' But the church in that state hath power to put away from among them and their communion an obstinate offender. They have it, as they are a society, by voluntary confederation. Wherein this comes short of authoritative excommunication, will immediately appear.

4. Where a church is complete and organized with its stated rulers, as the church of Corinth was, yet rules, instructions, and commands are given expressly unto the fraternity or community of the church, for their duty and acting in the administration of this sentence, and the cutting off an offender, 1 Cor. v. 2. 4. 6, 7. 2 Cor. ii. 7, 8. Yea, the ἐπιτιμία, or infliction of the sentence, is ascribed unto them, ver. 5. All these things do suppose a right and duty thereon to act according to their interest in excommunication, to reside in the whole church. Wherefore,

5. There are some acts belonging hereunto, that the church itself, in the body of the fraternity, cannot be excluded from without destroying the nature of the sentence itself, and rendering it ineffectual. Such are the previous cognizance of the cause, without which they cannot be blamed for any neglect about it; preparatory duties unto its execution, in prayer, mourning, and admonition, which are expressly prescribed unto them; and a testification of their consent unto it, by their common suffrage. Without these things, excommunication is but a name with a noise; it belongs not unto the order appointed by Christ in his church.

6. Hence arise the duties of the church towards an excommunicated person, that are consequential unto his exclusion from among them. Such are praying for him, as one noted by the church, and under the discipline of Christ; avoiding communion with him in public and private, that he may be ashamed, and the like; all which arise from their own voluntary actings in his exclusion; and such, as without a judgment of the cause, they cannot be obliged unto.

7. Yet on the other side, unto the formal completeness of this sentence, an authoritative act of office-power is required. For, (1.) There is in it such an act of rule, as is in the hands of the elders only. (2.) The executive power of the keys in binding and loosing, so far as it compriseth authority to be acted in the name of Christ, is intrusted with them only.

8. Wherefore I shall say no more in answer unto this inquiry; but that excommunication is an act of church-power in its officers and brethren, acting according unto their respective rights, interests, and duties particularly prescribed unto them. The officers of the church act in it as officers with authority, the brethren or the body of the church with power; yet so, as that the officers are no way excluded from their power, consent, and suffrage in the acting of the church, but have the same interest therein with all other members of the church; but the community of the church have no interest in those authoritative actings of the officers which are peculiar unto them. Where either of these is wanting, the whole duty is vitiated, and the sense of the sentence rendered ineffectual.

I. It is inquired, Whether excommunication, justly deserved, may and ought to be omitted in case of trouble, or danger that may ensue unto the church therein.

It is usually granted that so it may and ought to be; which seems in general to have been the judgment of Austin.

The troubles and dangers intended, are three-fold. 1. From the thing itself. 2. From the persons to be excommunicated. 3. From the church.

1. Trouble may arise from the thing itself. For there being an exercise of authority or jurisdiction in it over the persons of men, not granted from the civil magistrate by the law of the land, those that execute it may be liable unto penalties ordained in such cases.

2. The persons to be excommunicated may be great, and of great interest in the world, so as that if they receive a provocation hereby, they may occasion or stir up persecution against the church, as it hath often fallen out.

3. The church itself may be divided on these considerations, so as that lasting differences may be occasioned among them, which the omission of the sentence might prevent.

For answer hereunto, some things must be premised. As,

1. Here is no supposition of any thing sinful or morally evil in the church, its officers, or any of its members, by refusing to omit the pronouncing of this sentence. Whether there be any sin in giving occasion unto the troubles mentioned, to be avoided by an omission of duty, is now to be inquired into.

2. We must suppose, (1.) That the cause of excommunication be clear and evident, both as unto the merit of the fact, and the due application of it unto the person concerned; so as that no rational indifferent man shall be able to say, that it is meet that such a one should be continued a member of such a society; as it ought to be, wherever excommunication is administered. (2.) That sufficient time and space of repentance, and for giving satisfaction unto the church (whereof afterward) hath been allowed unto the person after admonition. (3.) That the church doth really suffer in honour and reputation by tolerating such a scandalous offender among them.

I answer, On these suppositions I see no just reason to countenance the omission of the execution of this sentence, or to acquit the church from the guilt of sin in so doing. For,

1. The first pretence of danger is vain. There is not the least shadow of jurisdiction in this act of the church. There is nothing in it that toucheth any thing which is under the protection and conservation of human laws. It reacheth not the persons of men in their lives, or liberties, nor their estates, or the least secular privileges that they do enjoy; it doth not expose them to the power or censures of others, nor prejudge them as unto office or advantage of life. There is therefore no concernment of the law of the land herein, no more than in a parent's disinheriting a rebellious child.

2. As unto danger of persecution, by the means of the person provoked, I say, (1.) The same may be pleaded as unto all other duties of obedience unto Jesus Christ wherewith the world is provoked; and so the whole profession of the church should give place to the fear of persecution. To testify against sin in the way of Christ's appointment, is a case of confession. (2.) The apostles were not deterred by this consideration from the excommunication of Simon Magus, the seducing Jews, Hymeneus and Alexander, with

others. (3.) The Lord Christ commandeth and reproveth his churches, according as they were strict in the observation of this duty, or neglective of it, notwithstanding the fear of persecution thereon, Rev. ii. 3. And, (4.) He will take that care of his church in all their obedience unto him, as shall turn all the consequences thereof unto their advantage.

3. As unto danger of differences in the church, there is nothing to be said; but that if rule, order, love, and duty will not prevent such differences, there is no way appointed of Christ for that end; and if they are sufficient for it (as they are abundantly), they must bear their own blame who occasion such differences.

II. But it may be said, What if such an offender as justly deserves to be excommunicated, and is under admonition in order thereunto in case of impenitency, should voluntarily withdraw himself from, and leave the communion of the church, is there any necessity to proceed against him by excommunication?

Ans. 1. Some say it is enough, if it be declared in the church that such a one hath cut off himself from the church, and is therefore no longer under their watch or care, but is left unto himself and the world. And this is sufficient with them who own no act of office-power or authority in excommunication, but esteem it only a noted cessation of communion, which destroys a principal branch of the power of the keys. Wherefore,

2. Where the offence is plain, open, scandalous, persisted in; where admonition is despised or not complied with, it is the duty of the church to denounce the sentence or excommunication against such a person, notwithstanding his voluntary departure. For,

1. No man is to make an advantage unto himself, or to be freed from any disadvantage, censure, or spiritual penalty, by his own sin; such as is the voluntary relinquishment of the church, by a person under admonition for scandalous offences.

2. It is necessary unto the church, both as unto the discharge of its duty, and the vindication of its honour; as also from the benefit and edification it will receive by those duties of humiliation, mourning, and prayer, which are necessary unto the execution of this sentence.

3. It is necessary for the good and benefit of him who so deserves to be excommunicated. For, (1.) The end of the institution of the ordinance, is his correction, not his destruction, and may be effectual unto his repentance and recovery. (2.) It is to be followed with sharp admonition and prayer, which in due time, may reach the most profligate sinner.

4. It becomes not the wisdom and order of any society intrusted with authority for its own preservation, as the church is by Christ himself, to suffer persons obnoxious unto censure by the fundamental rules of that society, to cast off all respect unto it, to break their order and relation, without animadverting thereon, according to the authority wherewith they are intrusted. To do otherwise is to expose their order unto contempt, and proclaim a diffidence in their own authority, for the spiritual punishment of offenders.

5. One end of the appointment of the power and sentence of excommunication in the church, is to give testimony unto the future final judgment of Christ against impenitent sinners, which none of them can run away from, nor escape.

III. A third inquiry may be, Whether in case of any great and scandalous sin, the church may proceed unto excommunication, without any previous admonition.

Ans. 1. Persons may be falsely accused of, and charged with great sins, the greatest of sins, as well as those of a lesser degree, and that both by particular testimonies and public reports, as it was with the Lord Christ himself; which daily experience confirms. Wherefore, all haste and precipitation like that of David in judging the case of Mephibosheth, is carefully to be avoided, though they are pressed under the pretences of the greatness and notoriety of the sin.

2. There is no individual actual sin, but it is capable of great aggravation or alleviation from its circumstances; these the church is to inquire into, and to obtain a full knowledge of them, that all things being duly weighed, they may be affected with the sin in a due manner, or after a godly sort; which is essential unto the right administration of this ordinance.

3. This cannot be done, without personal conference with the offender, who is to be allowed to speak for himself. This conference, in case guilt be discovered, cannot but have in it the nature of an admonition, whereon the church is to proceed, as in case of previous solemn admonition, in the order, and according to the rule which shall be immediately declared.

IV. Fourthly, Whether on the first knowledge of an offence or scandalous sin, if it be known unto the church, that the offending party is penitent, and willing to declare his humiliation and repentance for the satisfaction of the church, may the church proceed unto his excommunication, in case the sin be great and notorious ?

Ans. 1. It is certain, that in an orderly progress, as unto more private sins, a compliance by repentance with the first or second admonition, doth put a stop unto all farther ecclesiastical procedure.

2. But whereas the inquiry is made concerning sins, either in their own nature or in their circumstances, great and of disreputation unto the church : I answer,

If repentance be evidenced unto the consciences of the rulers of the church to be sincere, and proportionable unto the offence in its outward demonstration, according unto the rule of the gospel, so as that they are obliged to judge in charity, that the person sinning is pardoned and accepted with Christ, as all sincerely penitent sinners are undoubtedly; the church cannot proceed unto the excommunication of such an offender. For,

1. It would be publicly to reject them whom they acknowledge that Christ doth receive. This nothing can warrant them to do ; yea, so to do is to set up themselves against Christ, or at least to make use of his authority against his mind and will. Yea, such a sentence would destroy itself; for it is a declaration that Christ doth disapprove them, whom he doth approve.

2. Their so doing would make a misrepresentation of the gospel, and of the Lord Christ therein. For, whereas the principal design of the gospel, and of the representation that is made therein of Christ Jesus, is to evidence that all sincerely penitent sinners, that repent according unto the rule of it, are and shall be pardoned and accepted ; by the

rejection of such a person in the face of his sincere repentance, there is an open contradiction thereunto. Especially it would give an undue sense of the heart, mind, and will of Christ towards repenting sinners; such as may be dangerous unto the faith of believers, so far as the execution of this sentence is doctrinal: for such it is, and declarative of the mind of Christ according unto the judgment of the church. The image, therefore, of this excommunication, which is set up in some churches, wherein the sentence of it is denounced without any regard unto the mind of Christ, as unto his acceptance or disapprobation of those whom they excommunicate, is a teacher of lies.

3. Such a procedure is contrary unto the nature and end of this sentence; for it is corrective and instructive, not properly punishing and vindictive. The sole end of it, with respect whereunto it hath its efficacy from divine institution, is the humiliation, repentance, and recovery of the sinner. And if this be attained before, the infliction of this sentence is contrary to the nature and end of it.

It will be said, that it hath another end also; namely, the preservation of the purity of the church, and the vindication of its honour and reputation, wherein it suffers by the scandalous offences of any of its members. Whereunto, I say, (1.) No church is or can be made impure by them whom Christ hath purged; as he doth all those who are truly penitent. (2.) It is no dishonour unto any church to have sinners in it, who have evidenced sincere repentance. (3.) The present offence and scandal may be provided against by an act of rectoral prudence, in causing the offending person to abstain from the Lord's table for a season.

V. It is inquired, (Fifthly), Whether such as voluntarily, causelessly, and disorderly, do leave the communion of any church whereof they are members, though not guilty of any scandalous immoralities, may and ought to be excommunicated?

Ans. 1. Where persons are esteemed members of churches by external causes without their own consent, or by parochial cohabitation, they may remove from one church unto another by the removal of their habitation, according unto their own discretion. For such cohabitation being the only formal cause of any relation to such a church in par-

ticular, upon the ceasing of that cause, the relation ceaseth of its own accord.

2. Where persons are members of churches by mutual confederation, or express personal consent, causeless departure from them is an evil liable unto many aggravations.

3. But whereas the principal end of all particular churches is edification, there may be many just and sufficient reasons why a person may remove himself from the constant communion of one church unto that of another. And of these reasons he himself is judge, on whom it is incumbent to take care of his own edification above all other things. Nor ought the church to deny unto any such persons their liberty desired peaceably and according unto order.

4. It was declared before, that where any persons guilty of, and under admonition for, any scandalous sin, do withdraw from the communion of any church, their so doing is no impediment unto a farther procedure against them.

5. Whereas there are amongst us churches, or those who are so esteemed in the consciences of men, so far differing in principles and practices, as that they have not entire communion with one another in all parts of divine worship, it may be inquired, Whether if a man leave a church of one sort to join with one of another; as suppose he leave a select congregation to join in a parochial church constantly and totally, he may be justly excommunicated for so doing, without the consent of the church whereunto he did belong.

Ans. 1. It is certain on the one hand, that if any man leave the communion of parochial assemblies to join himself unto a select congregation, those who have power over those parishes, will make no question whether they shall excommunicate him or no in their way. But,

2. Supposing persons so departing from particular congregations, (1.) To be free from scandalous sins. (2.) That they depart quietly, without attempting disorder or confusion in the church. (3.) That they do actually join themselves unto the communion of some church, whose constitution, principles, and worship they do approve, whereby their visible profession is preserved; the church may not justly proceed unto their excommunication; it may suffice to declare, that such persons have on their own accord for-

saken the communion of the church, are no more under its watch and care; neither is the church further obliged towards them, but as unto Christian duties in general.

6. As for those whose departure is as voluntary and causeless, so accompanied with other evils, such as are revilings, reproaches, and false accusations, as is usual in such cases, they may be proceeded against as obstinate offenders.

VI. The sixth inquiry is, What time is to be given after solemn admonition before actual excommunication?

Ans. 1. The manner of some to run over the words, 'I admonish you a first, second, and third time,' so immediately to make way for the sentence of excommunication, is that wherein men are greatly to be pitied for their ignorance of the nature of those things which they take on themselves to act, order, and dispose of, that we ascribe it not unto worse and more evil causes.

2. The nature of the thing itself requires a considerable season or space of time, between solemn admonition and excommunication. For the end and design of the former is the repentance and recovery of the offender. Nor doth its efficacy thereunto depend on, or consist in, the actual giving of it; but as other moral causes which may work gradually, upon occasional advantages. Want of light, some present exasperation and temptation, may seem to frustrate a present admonition, when they do but suspend its present efficacy, which it may afterward obtain on the conscience of the offender.

3. It being a church admonition that is intended, it is the duty of the church to abide in prayer and waiting for the fruit of it, according to the appointment of Christ. And herein the case may possibly require some long time to be spent.

4. No present appearance of obstinacy or impenitence under admonition (which is usually pleaded), should cause an immediate procedure unto excommunication. For, (1.) It is contrary unto the distinct institution of the one, and the other; wherein the former is to be allowed its proper season for its use and efficacy. (2.) It doth not represent the patience and forbearance of Christ towards his church and all the members of it. (3.) It is not suited unto

the rule of that love which 'hopeth all things, beareth all things,' &c. (4.) All grounds of hope for the recovery of sinners by repentance, are to be attended unto, so as to defer the ultimate sentence.

Nulla unquam de morte hominis cunctatio longa est.

5. If new sins are added of the same, or any other kind, unto former scandals, whilst persons are under admonition, it is an indication of the necessity of a procedure.

VII. It may be farther inquired, Whether a man may be excommunicated for errors in matters of faith, or false opinions about them?

Ans. 1. The case is so plainly and positively stated, Rev. ii. 2. 6. 15, 16. 20. 1 Tim. i. 19, 20. Tit. iii. 10, 11. and other places, that it needs no farther determination. Wherefore,

2. If the errors intended, are about or against the fundamental truths of the gospel, so as that they that hold them cannot hold the Head, but really make 'shipwreck of the faith,' no pretended usefulness of such persons, no peaceableness as unto outward deportment, which men guilty of such abominations, will frequently cover themselves withal, can countenance the church in forbearing after due admonition, to cut them off from their communion. The nature of the evil, the danger that is from it unto the whole church, as from a gangrene in any member unto the body, the indignation of Christ expressed against such pernicious doctrines, the opposition of them to the building of the church on the rock, which in most of them is opposed, do render a church altogether inexcusable, who omit their duty herein.

3. False opinions in lesser things, when the foundation of faith and Christian practice are not immediately concerned, may be tolerated in a church, and sundry rules are given unto this end in the Scripture, as Rom. xiv. 1—3, &c. Phil. iii. 15, 16. Howbeit, in that low ebb of grace, love, and prudence, which we are come unto, it is best for edification, that all persons peaceably dispose themselves into those societies with whom they most agree in principles and opinions; especially such as relate or lead unto practice in any duties of worship. But,

4. With respect unto such opinions, if men will, as is

usual, wrangle and contend to the disturbance of the peace of the church, or hinder it in any duty, with respect unto its own edification, and will neither peaceably abide in the church, nor peaceably depart from it, they may and ought to be proceeded against with censures of the church.

VIII. Whether persons excommunicated out of any church may be admitted unto the hearing of the word in the assemblies of that church?

Ans. 1. They may be so; as also to be present at all duties of moral worship; for so may heathens and unbelievers; 1 Cor. xiv. 23, 24.

2. When persons are under this sentence, the church is in a state of expecting of their recovery and return; and therefore are not to prohibit them any means thereof, such as is preaching of the word.

IX. How far extends the rule of the apostle towards persons rejected of the church; 1 Cor. .v 11. 'With such an one no not to eat;' as that also, 'Note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed?' 2 Thes. iii. 14.

1. To eat compriseth all ordinary converse in things of this life; 'Give us our daily bread.' (2.) To note, is either the act of the church, setting the mark of its censure and disapprobation on him; or the duty of the members of the church, to take notice of him, as unto the end of not keeping company with him. Wherefore,

2. Herein all ordinary converse of choice, not made necessary by previous occasions, is forbidden. The rule, I say, forbids, (1.) All ordinary converse of choice; not that which is occasional. (2.) Converse about earthly secular things, not that which is spiritual; for such a one may and ought still to be admonished, whilst he will hear the word of admonition. (3.) It is such converse as is not made previously necessary, by men's mutual engagement in trade and the like. For that is founded on such rules of right and equity, with such obligations in point of truth, as excommunication cannot dissolve.

3. No suspension of duties antecedently necessary by virtue of natural or moral relation, is allowed or countenanced by this rule. Such are those of husband and wife, parents and children, magistrates and subjects, masters and servants,

neighbours, relations in propinquity of blood. No duties arising from or belonging unto any of these relations, are released, or the obligation unto them weakened by excommunication. Husbands may not hereon forsake their wives if they are excommunicated, nor wives their husbands; magistrates may not withdraw their protection from any of their subjects, because they are excommunicate; much less may subjects withhold their obedience on any pretence of the excommunication of their magistrates, as such. And the same is true as unto all other natural or moral relations.

4. The ends of this prohibition are, (1.) To testify our condemnation of the sin, and disapprobation of the person guilty of it, who is excommunicated. (2.) The preservation of ourselves from all kinds of participation in his sin. (3.) To make him ashamed of himself, that if he be not utterly profligate and given up unto total apostacy, it may occasion in him thoughts of returning.

X. How ought persons excommunicated to be received into the church upon their repentance?

Ans. 1. As unto the internal manner; with all readiness and cheerfulness; with (1.) Meekness, to take from them all discouragement and disconsolation; Gal. vi. 1. (2.) With compassion, and all means of relief and consolation; 2 Cor. ii. 7. (3.) With love in all the demonstrations of it; ver. 8. (4.) With joy, to represent the heart of Christ towards repenting sinners.

2. The outward manner of the restoration of such a person consists in, (1.) His testification of his repentance unto the satisfaction of the church. (2.) The express consent of the church unto his reception. (3.) His renewed engagement in the covenant of the church, whereby he is re-instated, or jointed again in the body, in his own proper place. In all which the elders, by their authority, are to go before the church.

All sorts of persons do now condemn the opinions of the Novatians, in refusing the re-admission of lapsed sinners into the church upon repentance. But there may be an evil observed amongst some, leading that way, or unto what is worse: and this is, that they seek not after the recovery of those that are excommunicated, by prayer, admonition, exhortation in a spirit of meekness and tenderness; but are well satisfied

that they have quitted themselves of their society. It is better never to excommunicate any, than so to carry it towards them when they are excommunicated. But there is a sort of men, unto whom if a man be once an offender, he shall be so for ever.

XI. Our last inquiry shall be, Whether excommunication may be regular and valid, whether the matter of right is dubious and disputable? As many such cases may fall out, especially with respect unto the occasions of life, and mutual converse; or when the matter of fact is not duly proved by positive witnesses, on the one hand, and is denied on the other.

Ans. 1. The foundation of the efficacy of excommunication, next and under its divine institution, lies in the light and conviction of the consciences of them that are to be excommunicated. If these are not affected with a sense of guilt, as in dubious cases they may not be, the sentence will be of no force nor efficacy.

2. A case wherein there is a difference in the judgment of good and wise men about it, is to be esteemed such a dubious case as is exempted from this censure. Nothing is to be admitted here to take place, but what is reprovable by natural light, and the concurrent judgment of them that fear God.

3. If the case be about such a right or wrong, in pretended fraud, over-reaching, or the like, as is determinable by civil-laws, the church is no judge in such cases; unless it be by way of arbitration; 1 Cor. vi.

4. If the question be about doctrines that are not in points fundamental, so as those who dissent from the church do carry it peaceably and orderly, there can be no procedure unto ecclesiastical censures: but if men will dote on their own opinions, wrangling, contending, and breaking the peace of the church about them, there are other rules given in that case.

5. If the matter of fact be to be determined and stated by witness, it is absolutely necessary, by virtue of divine institution, that there be two or three concurrent testimonies; one witness is not to be regarded; see Deut. xix. 15. Num. xxxv. 30. Matt. xviii. 16, &c. Wherefore the ensuing rules or

directions are to be observed in the matter of excommunication.

1. No excommunication is to be allowed in cases dubious and disputable, wherein right and wrong are not easily determinable unto all unprejudiced persons, that know the will of God in such things. Nor is it to be admitted when the matter of fact stands in need of testimony, and is not proved by two witnesses at the least.

2. All prejudices, all partiality, all provocations, all haste and precipitation, are most carefully to be avoided in this administration; for the judgment is the Lord's. Wherefore,

3. We are continually, in all things that tend unto this sentence, and eminently in the sentence itself, to charge our consciences with the mind of Christ, and what he would do himself in the case; considering his love, grace, mercy, and patience; with instances of his condescension which he gave us in this world.

4. There is also required of us herein, a constant remembrance that we also are in the flesh, and liable to temptation, which may restrain and keep in awe that forwardness and confidence which some are apt to manifest in such cases. In all these things, a watchful eye is to be kept over the methods of Satan; who by all means seeks to pervert this ordinance unto the destruction of men, which is appointed for their edification; and too often prevails in that design. And if by the negligence of a church in the management and pursuit of this ordinance, he gets advantage to pervert it unto the ruin of any, it is the fault of that church, in that they have not been careful of the honour of Christ therein. Wherefore,

1. As excommunication by a cursed noise and clamour with bell, book, and candle (such as we have instances of in some papal councils), is an horrible antichristian abomination. So,

2. It is an undue representation of Christ and his authority, for persons openly guilty of profaneness in sinning, to excommunicate them who are blameless in all Christian obedience.

3. All excommunication is evangelically null where there

is wanting an evangelical frame of spirit in those by whom it is administered; and there is present an anti-evangelical order in its administration.

4. It is sufficiently evident, that after all the contests and disputes about this excommunication that have been in the world, the noise that it hath made, the horrible abuses that it hath been put unto, the wresting of all church-order and rule to give countenance unto a corrupt administration of it, with the needless oppositions that have been made against its institution; there is nothing in it, nothing belongs unto it, nothing required unto its administration, wherein men's outward interests are at all concerned, and which the smallest number of sincere Christians in any church-society, may not perform and discharge unto the glory of Christ, and their own edification.

It is the mystery of iniquity that hath traversed these things into such a state and posture, as is unintelligible unto spiritual wisdom, unpracticable in the obedience of faith, and ruinous unto all evangelical order and discipline.

CHAP. XI.

Of the communion of churches.

Churches so appointed, and established in order as hath been declared, ought to hold communion among themselves, or with each other, as unto all the ends of their institution and order: for these are the same in all. Yea, the general end of them is in order of nature considered antecedently unto their institution in particular. This end is the edification of the body of Christ in general, or the church catholic. The promotion hereof is committed jointly and severally unto all particular churches. Wherefore, with respect hereunto, they are obliged unto mutual communion among themselves, which is their consent, endeavour, and conjunction in and for the promotion of the edification of the catholic church, and therein their own, as they are parts and members of it.

This communion is incumbent on every church, with respect unto all other churches of Christ in the world equally.

And the duties and acts of it in all of them, are of the same kind and nature. For there is no such disparity between them, or subordination among them, as should make a difference between the acts of their mutual communion; so as that the acts of some should be acts of authority, and those of others acts of obedience or subjection. Wherever there is a church, whether it be at Rome or Egubium, in a city or a village, the communion of them all is mutual, the acts of it of the same kind; however one church may have more advantages to be useful and helpful therein than another. And the abuse of those advantages was that which wrought effectually in the beginning of that disorder, which at length destroyed the catholic church, with all church communion whatever. For some churches, especially that of Rome, having many advantages, in gifts, abilities, numbers, and reputation above many, above most churches for usefulness in their mutual communion; the guides of it insensibly turned and perverted the addresses made unto them, the advices and assistances desired of them in way of communion, or their pretences of such addresses and desires, into a usurpation, first of a primacy of honour, then of order, then of supremacy and jurisdiction, unto the utter overthrow of all church-order and communion, and at length of the whole nature of the catholic church, as stated and subsisting in particular churches, as we shall see.

All churches, on their first institution, quickly found themselves indigent and wanting, though not as unto their being, power, and order; yet as unto their well-being, with their preservation in truth and order, upon extraordinary occurrences, as also with respect unto their usefulness and serviceableness, unto the general end of furthering the edification of the church catholic. The care hereof, and the making provision for this defect, was committed by our Lord Jesus Christ unto the apostles during their lives, which Paul calls ἡ μέριμνα πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν; 2 Cor. xi. 28. 'The care of all the churches.' For what was only a pressing care and burden unto them, was afterward contended for by others, as a matter of dignity and power; the pretence of it, in one especially, being turned into a cursed domination, under the style and title of 'Servus servorum Dei.'

But if a thousand pretences should be made of supplying

churches' defects, after the decease of the apostles, by any other order, way, or means, besides this of the equal communion of churches among themselves, they will be all found destitute of any countenance from the Scripture, primitive antiquity, the nature, use, and end of churches, yea, of Christian religion itself. Yet the pretence hereof is the sole foundation of all that disposal of churches into several stories of subordination, with an authority and jurisdiction over one another, which now prevails in the world. But there is no place for such imaginations, until it be proved, either that our Lord Jesus Christ hath not appointed the mutual communion of churches among themselves by their own consent; or that it is not sufficient for the preservation of the union, and furtherance of the edification, of the church catholic, whereunto it is designed.

Wherefore, our Lord Jesus Christ, in his infinite wisdom, hath constituted his churches in such a state and order, as wherein none of them are able of themselves, always and in all instances, to attain all the ends for which they are appointed, with respect unto the edification of the church catholic. And he did it for this end, that whereas the whole catholic church is animated by one spirit, which is the bond of union between all particular churches (as we shall see), every one of them may act the gifts and graces of it unto the preservation and edification of the whole.

Herein then, we acknowledge, lieth the great difference which we have with others about the state of the church of Christ in this world; we do believe that the mutual communion of particular churches amongst themselves, in an equality of power and order, though not of gifts and usefulness, is the only way appointed by our Lord Jesus Christ after the death of the apostles, for the attaining the general end of all particular churches, which is the edification of the church catholic, in faith, love, and peace. Other ways and means have been found out in the world for this end, which we must speak unto immediately. Wherefore, it behoveth us to use some diligence in the consideration of the causes, nature, and use of this communion of churches.

But it must be moreover premised, that whereas this communion of churches is radically and essentially the same among all churches in the world, yet, as unto the ordinary

actual exercise of the duties of it, it is confined and limited by divine providence unto such churches, as the natural means of the discharge of such duties may extend unto; that is, unto those which are planted within such lines of communication, such precincts or boundaries of places and countries, as may not render the mutual performance of such duties insuperably difficult. Yet is not the world itself so wide, but that, all places being made pervious by navigation, this communion of churches may be visibly professed, and in some instances practised among all churches, 'from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, where the name of Christ is known among the Gentiles;' wherein the true nature of the catholic church and its union doth consist, which is utterly overthrown by the most vehement pretences that are made unto it, as those in the church of Rome.

Wherefore such a communion of churches is to be inquired after, as from which no true church of Christ is or can be excluded; in whose actual exercise they may and ought all to live, and whereby the general end of all churches in the edification of the catholic church may be attained. This is the true and only catholicism of the church, which whoever departs from, or substitutes any thing else in the room of it, under that name, destroys its whole nature, and disturbs the whole ecclesiastical harmony, that is, of Christ's institution.

However therefore we plead for the rights of particular churches, yet our real controversy with most in the world, is for the being, union, and communion of the church catholic, which are variously perverted by many, and separating it into parties, and confining it to rules, measures, and canons of their own finding out and establishment. For such things as these belong neither to the internal nor external form of that catholic church, whose being in the world, we believe, and whose union we are obliged to preserve. And whoever gives any description of, or limitation to, the catholic church, besides what consist in the communion of particular churches intended, doth utterly overthrow it, and therein an article of our faith.

But this communion of churches cannot be duly apprehended, unless we inquire and determine wherein their union

doth consist. For communion is an act of union, that receives both its nature and power from it, or by virtue of it. For of what nature soever the union of things distinct in themselves be, of the same is the communion that they have among themselves.

In the church of Rome, the person of the pope, as he is pope, is the head and centre of all church union. Nor is there allowed any union of particular churches with Christ or among themselves, but in and through him. A universal subjection unto him and his authority, is the original spring of all church union among them. And if any one soul fail herein; if, as unto things of faith and divine worship, he do not depend on the pope, and live in subjection unto him, he is reputed a stranger and foreigner unto the catholic church. Yea, they affirm, that be a man never so willing for, and desirous of, an interest in Christ, he cannot have it but by the pope.

The communion of churches congenial and suited unto this union, proceeding from it, and exercised by virtue of it, ariseth from a various contignation of order, or the erection of one story of church interest upon another, until we come to the idol placed on the top of this Babel. So is this communion carried on from the obedience and subjection of the lowest rubbish of ecclesiastical order, unto diocesans, of them to metropolitans, of them to patriarchs or cardinals, of them to the pope; or an ascent is made from diocesan synods, by provincial and national, to those that are called œcumenical, whose head is the pope.

Yet two things must be farther observed, to clear this communion of the Roman catholic church; as, 1. That there is no ascent of church-order or power by a vital act of communion from the lower degrees, orders, or consociations, and by them to the pope, as though he should receive any thing of church-power from them; but all the plenitude of it being originally vested in him, by these several orders and degrees, he communicates of it unto all churches, as the life of their conjunction and communion. 2. That no man is so jointed in this order, so compacted in this body, but that he is also personally and immediately subject to the pope, and depends on him as unto his whole profession of religion.

And this is that which constitutes him formally to be

what he is, that is, antichrist; and the church-state arising from its union unto him, holding him as its head, subsisting in a communion by virtue of power received through various orders and constitutions from him, to be antichristian. For he and it are set up in the room of, and in direct opposition unto, the Lord Christ, as the head of the catholic church, and the church-state thereon depending. This we have described, Eph. iv. 15, 16. 'Speaking the truth in love, may grow up,' &c. As also, Col. ii. 19. Where there is a rejection of them who belong not unto the church catholic, taken from its relation unto Christ, and the nature of its dependence on him; 'not holding the head,' &c.

When men shall cease to be wilfully blind, or when the powers of the strong delusion that begin to abate shall expire, they will easily see the direct opposition that is between these two heads and two churches, namely Christ and the pope, the catholic church and that of Rome.

I know well enough all the evasions and distinctions that are invented to countenance this antichristianism. As that there is a double head, one of internal influence of grace, which Christ is, and the pope is not; the other of rule and authority, which the pope is. But this also is twofold; supreme and remote; or immediate and subordinate; the first is Christ, the latter is the pope. And there is yet farther a twofold head of the church; the one invisible, which is Christ; the other visible, which is the pope.

Not to insist on these gross and horrible figments of a twofold head of the catholic church in any sense, which are foreign to the Scripture, foreign to antiquity, whereof never one word was heard in the church for six hundred years after Christ, deforming the beautiful spouse of Christ into a monster; we will allow at present, that the pope is only the immediate, visible, subordinate head of all rule and authority to their church, which is what they plead for. Then I say, that the church whereof he is the head is his body; that it holds him as its head; that it is compacted together by the officers and orders that depend on him, and receive all their influence of church-power and order from him, which though he communicates not by an internal influence of grace and gifts (alas! poor wretch), yet he doth it by officers, offices, orders and laws; so giving union and communion unto the

whole body by the effectual working of every joint and part of the hierarchy under him, for its union, communion, and edification. This, I say, is the antichrist, and the antichristian church-state, as I shall be at any time ready to maintain.

Let any man take a due prospect of this head and this body, as related and united by the bond of their own rules, constitutions, and laws, acting in worldly pomp, splendour, and power, with horrid bloody cruelties against all that oppose it, and he will not fail of an open view of all the Scriptural lineaments of the apostate antichristian state of the church.

I say again, this assigning of the original of all church-order, union, and communion, unto the pope of Rome, investing him therewith as an article of faith, constituting him thereby the head of the church; and the church thereon his body, as it must be if he be its head; so as that from him all power of order, and for all acts of communion, should be derived, returning all in obedience and subjection unto him, doth set up a visible, conspicuous antichristian church-state, in opposition unto Christ and the catholic church. But with this sort of men we deal not at present.

There is a pretence unto a union of churches not derived from the papal headship. And this consists in the canonical subjection of particular churches unto a diocesan bishop; and of such bishops to metropolitans; which though 'de facto' it be at present terminated and stated within the bounds of a nation; yet 'de jure,' it ought to be extended unto the whole catholic church.

According unto this principle, the union of the catholic church consists in that order, whereby particular churches are distributed into deaneries, archdeaconries, exempt peculiars, under officials; diocesses, provinces, under metropolitans, and so by or without patriarchs, to avoid the rock of the papacy, issuing in a general council, as I suppose. But,

1. To confine the union and communion of the catholic church hereunto, is at present absolutely destructive both of the church and its communion. For all particular churches, when they are by a coalescency extended unto those which are provincial or national, have both politically and ecclesiastically such bounds fixed unto them, as they cannot pass

to carry on communion unto and with the church, as catholic, by any acts and duties belonging unto their order: and hereby the union and communion of the church is utterly lost. For the union of the catholic church, as such, doth always equally exist, and the communion of it is always equally in exercise, and can consist in nothing but what doth so exist and is so exercised. Wherever is the catholic church, there is the communion of saints. But nothing of this can be obtained by virtue of this order.

2. We inquire at present after such a union as gives particular churches communion among themselves; which this order doth not, but absolutely overthrows it; leaving nothing unto them but subjection to officers set over them, who are not of them, according to rules and laws of their appointment; which is foreign to the Scripture and antiquity.

3. This order itself, the only bond of the pretended union, having no divine institution, especially as to its extent unto the whole catholic church, nor any intimation in the Scripture, and being utterly impossible to be put in execution or actual exercise, no man can declare what is the original or centre of it, whence it is deduced, and wherein it rests.

Having removed these pretences out of our way, we may easily discern wherein the union, and consequently the communion, of all particular churches doth consist; and in the due observation whereof, all that church-order which the Lord Christ hath appointed and doth accept, is preserved.

I say then, that the true and only union of all particular churches, consists in that which gives form, life, and being unto the church catholic, with the addition of what belongs unto them as they are particular. And this is, that they have all one and the same God and Father, one Lord Jesus Christ, one faith and one doctrine of faith, one hope of their calling or the promised inheritance, one regeneration, one baptism, one bread and wine; united unto God and Christ in one Spirit, through the bond of faith and love.

This description, with what is suited thereunto, and explanatory of it, is all the account which is given us in the Scripture of the constituting form of the catholic church, and of the union of particular churches among themselves. What church soever fails in the essential parts of this description, or any of them, it is separated from the catholic

church, nor hath either union or communion with any true churches of Christ.

Two things concur unto the completing of this union of churches. 1. Their union or relation unto Christ. 2. That which they have among themselves.

1. The Lord Christ himself is the original and spring of this union, and every particular church is united unto him as its head, besides which, with or under which, it hath none. This relation of the church unto Christ as its head, the apostle expressly affirms to be the foundation and cause of its union, Eph. iv. 15, 16. Col. ii. 19. the places before quoted. Hereby it is also in God the Father; 2 Thes. i. 1. or hath God as its Father. And unless this union be dissolved, unless a church be disunited from Christ, it cannot be so from the catholic church, nor any true church of Christ in particular; however, it may be dealt withal by others in the world.

From Christ, as the head and spring of union, there proceedeth unto all particular churches, a bond of union, which is his Holy Spirit, acting itself in them by faith and love, in and by the ways and means, and for the ends of his appointment.

This is the kingly, royal, beautiful union of the church. Christ, as the only head of influence and rule, bringing it into a relation unto himself as his body, communicating of his Spirit unto it, governing it by the law of his word, enabling it unto all the duties of faith, love, and holiness.

For unto the completing of this union on the part of the church, these things are required. (1.) Faith in him, or holding him as the head, in the sincere belief of all things concerning his person, office, and doctrine in the gospel, with whatever belongs thereunto. (2.) Love unto him and all that is his. (3.) That especial holiness, whose foundation is repentance and effectual vocation. (4.) The observance of his commands, as unto all duties of divine worship. These things are essentially requisite unto this union on the part of the church. The reality and power of them, is the internal form of the church, and the profession of them is its external form.

2. There concurreth hereunto an union among themselves, I mean all particular churches throughout the world, in whom the church catholic doth act its power and duty.

And the relation that is between these churches, is that which is termed 'relatio æquiparentiæ,' wherein neither of the 'relata' is the first foundation of it; but they are equal. It doth not arise from the subordination of one unto another, they being all equal as unto what concerns their essence and power. And the bond hereof is that especial love which Christ requireth among all his disciples, acting itself unto all the ends of the edification of the whole body.

Take in the whole, and the union of churches consists in their relation unto God as their father, and unto Christ as their only immediate head of influence and rule, with a participation of the same spirit, in the same faith and doctrine of truth, the same kind of holiness, the same duties of divine worship, especially the same mysteries of baptism and the supper, the observance of the same rules or commands of Christ in all church-order, with mutual love, effectual unto all the ends of their being and constitution, or the edification of the church catholic.

There may be failures in them or some of them, as unto sundry of these things; there may be differences among them about them, arising from the infirmities, ignorance, and prejudices of them of whom they do consist, the best knowing here but in part; but whilst the substance of them is preserved, the union of all churches, and so of the catholic church, is preserved.

This is that blessed oneness which the Lord Christ prayed for so earnestly for his disciples, that they might be 'one in the Father and the Son, one among themselves, and made perfect in one;' John xvii. 20—23. without any respect unto that horrid image of it, which was set up in the latter days of the church, which all men were compelled to bow down unto, and worship, ..'th the fire of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. Of any other union there is not the least mention in the Scripture.

This union of the catholic church in all particular churches, is always the same, inviolable, unchangeable, comprehending all the churches in the world at all times; not confineable unto any state or party, not interruptible by any external form, nor to be prevailed against by the gates of hell; and all such disputes about a catholic church, and its union, as can be so much as questionable among them that

profess to believe the gospel, are in direct opposition unto the prayers and promises of Jesus Christ. Whilst evangelical faith, holiness, obedience unto the commands of Christ, and mutual love abide in any on the earth, there is the catholic church; and whilst they are professed, that catholic church is visible; other catholic church upon the earth I believe none; nor any that needs other things unto its constitution.

These things being premised, I proceed unto that which is our present inquiry, namely, Wherein the communion of particular churches among themselves doth consist.

The communion of churches, is their joint actings in the same gospel duties towards God in Christ, with their mutual actings towards each other, with respect unto the end of their institution and being, which is the glory of Christ in the edification of the whole catholic church.

As unto the actings of the first sort, the ground of them is faith, and therein is the first act of the communion of churches. And this communion in faith among all the churches of Christ is twofold. 1. General in the belief of the same doctrine of truth, which is according unto godliness, the same articles of faith, and the public profession thereof; so that every one of them is the ground and pillar of the same truth. This the primitive church provided for in creeds and symbols, or confessions of faith, as is known. But as never any one of them was expressly owned by all churches; so in process of time they came to be abused, as expressing the sense of the present church, whether true or false. Hence we have as many Arian creeds yet extant, as those that are orthodox. But unto the communion of all particular churches in the world, there is nothing required but a belief of the Scripture to be the word of God, with a professed assent unto all divine revelations therein contained; provided that no error be avowed that is contrary to the principal or fundamental doctrines of it. For although any society of men should profess the Scripture to be the word of God, and avow an assent unto the revelations made therein, yet by the conceptions of their minds, and misunderstanding of the sense of the Holy Spirit therein, they may embrace and adhere unto such errors, as may cut them off from all communion with the catholic church in faith. Such

are the denial of the Holy Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, his divine person or office, the redemption of the church by his blood; the necessity of regeneration by his Spirit, and the like. And they may also add that of their own unto their professed belief, as shall exclude them from communion with the catholic church. Such are the assertion of traditions as equal with the written word; of another head of the church besides the Lord Christ; of another sacrifice besides what he once offered for all; and the like. But where any are preserved from such heresies on the one hand and the other, there is no more required unto communion with the whole church, as unto faith in general, but only the belief before described.

2. This communion in faith respects the church itself as its material object. For it is required hereunto, that we believe that the Lord Christ hath had in all ages, and especially hath in that wherein we live, a church on the earth, confined unto no places nor parties of men, no empires nor dominions, or capable of any confinement; as also that this church is redeemed, called, sanctified by him; that it is his kingdom, his interest, his concernment in the world; that thereunto, and all the members of it, all the promises of God do belong and are confined; that this church he will save, preserve, and deliver, from all oppositions, so as that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and after death will raise it up and glorify it at the last day. This is the faith of the catholic church concerning itself, which is an ancient fundamental article of our religion. And if any one deny that there is such a church called out of the world, separated from it, unto which alone, and all the members of it, all the promises of God do appertain, in contradistinction unto all others, or confines it unto a party, unto whom these things are not appropriate, he cuts himself off from the communion of the church of Christ.

In the faith hereof, all the true churches of Christ throughout the world, have a comforting refreshing communion, which is the spring of many duties in them continually.

3. This communion of churches in faith, consists much in the principal fruit of it; namely, prayer. So is it stated, Eph. ii. 18. 'For through Christ we have an access by one

Spirit unto the Father.' And that therein the communion of the catholic church doth consist, the apostle declares in the following verses; 19—22. 'Now therefore,' &c. For prayer in all churches having one object, which is God even the Father, God as the Father, proceeding in all from one and the same Spirit, given unto them as a Spirit of grace and supplications to make intercession for them, and all of them continually offered unto God by the same High-priest, who adds unto it the incense of his own intercession, and by whom they have all an access unto the same throne of grace, they have all a blessed communion herein continually. And this communion is the more express in that the prayers of all are for all; so as that there is no particular church of Christ in the world, not any one member of any of them, but they have the prayers of all the churches in the world, and of all the members of them every day. And however this communion be invisible unto the eyes of flesh, yet is it glorious and conspicuous unto the eye of faith; and is a part of the glory of Christ the Mediator in heaven. This prayer proceeding from, or wrought by one and the same Spirit in them all, equally bestowed on them all, by virtue of the promise of Christ; having the same object, even God as a Father, and offered unto him by the same High-priest, together with his own intercession, gives unto all churches a communion, far more glorious than what consists in some outward rites and orders of men's devising.

But now if there be any other persons or churches, who have any other object of their prayers, but God even the Father, and as our Father in Christ; or have any other mediators or intercessors, by whom to convey or present their prayers unto God, but Christ alone, the only High-priest of the church; or do renounce the aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit, as a Spirit of grace and supplications, they cut themselves off from all communion with the catholic church herein.

4. The unity of faith in all churches, affecteth communion among them, in the administration of the same sacraments of baptism and the supper of the Lord. These are the same in, unto, and amongst them all. Neither do some variations, in the outward manner of their administration, interrupt that communion. But, wherever the continuation of these ordinances is denied, or their nature or use is perverted, or ido-

latrous worship is annexed unto their administration, their communion with the catholic church is renounced.

5. They have also by faith communion herein, in that all churches do profess a subjection unto the authority of Christ in all things, and an obligation upon them to do and observe all whatsoever he hath commanded.

Other instances of the like nature might be given; but these are sufficient to manifest how unscriptural the notion is, that there is no proper communion with or among churches but what consists in a compliance with certain powers, orders, and rites, the pressing whereof under the name of uniformity, hath cast all thoughts of real, evangelical church communion into oblivion.

Secondly, Churches ordained and constituted in the way and manner, and for the ends declared in our former discourse on this subject, and by virtue of their union unto Christ and among themselves, living constantly in all places of the world in the actual exercise of that communion, which consists in the performance of the same church duties towards God in Christ, unto their own continuation, increase, and edification, have also an especial union among themselves, and a mutual communion thence arising.

The bond of this union is love; not the common regulated affection of human nature so called; not merely that power and duty which is engraven on the hearts of men, by the law of creation, towards all of the same kind and blood with themselves; but an especial grace of the Holy Spirit, acting in the church as the principle and bond of its union unto itself; whence the command of it is called a new commandment; because in itself, as unto the only example of it in the person of Christ, the causes and motives unto it, with its peculiar ends and proper exercise, it was absolutely new and evangelical. An explanation of the nature of it belongs not unto this place, although it be a grace and a duty of so much importance, wherein so much of the life, power, and peculiar glory of Christian religion doth consist, and is either so utterly lost, or hath such vile images of it set up in the world, that it deserves a full consideration; which it may receive in another place.

I say the Holy Spirit of grace and love, being given from Christ, the fountain and centre of all church-union, to dwell

in, and abide with his church, thereby uniting it unto himself, doth work in it, and all the members of it, that mutual love, which may, and doth animate them unto all those mutual acts which are proper unto the relation wherein they stand, by virtue of their union unto Christ their head, as members of the same body one with another.

Herein consists the union of every church in itself, of all churches among themselves, and so of the whole catholic church; their communion consisting in regular acts and duties, proceeding from this love, and required by virtue of it.

This account of the union and communion of churches may seem strange unto some, who are enamoured on that image which is set up of them in the world, in canons, constitutions of rites, and outward order in various subordinations and ceremonies, which are most remote from making any due representation of them.

The church, in its dependance on Christ its head, being by its institution disposed unto its proper order for its own edification, or fitly joined together and compacted, this love working effectually in every office, officer, and member, according as unto its disposal in the body, for the receiving and communicating supplies for edification, gives the whole both its union and communion, all the actings of it being regulated by divine rule and prescription.

Instead hereof to erect a machine, the spring and centre of whose motions are unknown, any other, I mean, but external force compacted by the iron joints and bands of human laws, edifying itself by the power of offices and officers, foreign unto the Scripture, acting with weapons that are not spiritual, but carnal, and mighty through him whose work it is to cast the members of the church of Christ into prison, as unto an outward conformity, is to forsake the Scripture and follow our own imagination.

The outward acts of communion among churches, proceeding from this love, and the obligation that is on them to promote their mutual edification, may be referred unto the two heads of advice and assistance.

Churches have communion unto their mutual edification, by advice in synods or councils, which must in this place be considered.

Synods are the meetings of divers churches by their messengers or delegates, to consult and determine of such things as are of common concernment unto them all, by virtue of this communion which is exercised in them.

1. The necessity and warranty of such synods, ariseth, (1.) From the light of nature. For all societies which have the same original, the same rule, the same interest, the same ends, and which are in themselves mutually concerned in the good or evil of each other, are obliged by the power and conduct of reason, to advise in common for their own good, on all emergencies that stand in need thereof.

Churches are such societies; they have all one and the same authoritative institution, one and the same rule of order and worship, the same ends as we have declared; and their entire interest is one and the same. When therefore any thing occurs amongst them, that is attended with such difficulties as cannot be removed or taken away by any one of them severally, or in whose determination all of them are equally concerned, not to make use herein of common advice and counsel, is to forsake that natural light which they are bound to attend unto in all duties of obedience unto God.

2. The union of all churches, before described in one head, by one Spirit, through one faith and worship, unto the same ends, doth so compact them into one body mystical, as that none of them is or can be complete absolutely without a joint acting with other members of the same body unto the common good of the whole, as occasion doth require. And this joint acting with others in any church, can be no otherwise, but by common advice and counsel, which natural circumstances render impossible by any means but their convention in synods, by their messengers and delegates. For although there may be some use of letters missive, and was so eminently in the primitive churches, to ask the advice of one another in difficult cases, (as the first instance we have of the communion of churches after the days of the apostles, is in the letter of the church of Corinth unto that of Rome, desiring their advice about the composing of a difference among them, and the answer of the church of Rome thereunto); yet many cases may fall out among them, which cannot be reconciled or determined but by present

conference, such as that was recorded, Acts xv. No church therefore is so independent, as that it can always, and in all cases, observe the duties it owes unto the Lord Christ and the church catholic, by all those powers which it is able to act in itself distinctly, without conjunction with others. And the church that confines its duty unto the acts of its own assemblies, cuts itself off from the external communion of the church catholic; nor will it be safe for any man to commit the conduct of his soul to such a church. Wherefore,

3. This acting in synods is an institution of Jesus Christ; not in an express command, but in the nature of the thing itself fortified with apostolical example. For having erected such a church-state, and disposed all his churches into that order and mutual relation unto one another, as that none of them can be complete, or discharge their whole duty without mutual advice and counsel; he hath thereby ordained this way of their communion in synods, no other being possible unto that end. And thereby such conventions are interested in the promise of his presence; namely, that 'where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he will be in the midst of them.' For these assemblies being the necessary effect of his own constitution in the nature and use of his churches, are or may be in his name, and so enjoy his presence.

4. The end of all particular churches is the edification of the church catholic unto the glory of God in Christ. And it is evident, that in many instances this cannot be attained, yea, that it must be sinfully neglected, unless this way for the preservation and carrying of it on be attended unto. Truth, peace, and love may be lost among churches, and so the union of the catholic church in them be dissolved, unless this means for their preservation and reparation be made use of. And that particular church which extends not its duty beyond its own assemblies and members, is fallen off from the principal end of its institution. And every principle, opinion, or persuasion, that inclines any church to confine its care and duty unto its own edification only; yea, or of those only which agree with it in some peculiar practice, making it neglective of all due means of the edification of the church catholic, is schismatical.

5. There is direction hereunto included in the order and

method of church proceedings in case of offence, prescribed unto it by Christ himself. The beginning and rise of it, is between two individual persons; thence is it carried unto the cognizance and judgment of two or three others before unconcerned; from them it is to be brought unto the church; and there is no doubt but the church hath power to determine concerning it, as unto its own communion, to continue the offender in it or reject him from it. This must abide, as unto outward order and the preservation of peace. But no church is infallible in their judgment absolutely in any case; and in many their determinations may be so doubtful as not to affect the conscience of him who is censured. But such a person is not only a member of that particular church, but by virtue thereof of the catholic church also. It is necessary therefore that he should be heard and judged as unto his interest therein, if he doth desire it. And this can no way be done, but by such synods as we shall immediately describe.

6. Synods are consecrated unto the use of the church in all ages, by the example of the apostles, in their guidance of the first churches of Jews and Gentiles; which hath the force of a divine institution, as being given by them under the infallible conduct of the Holy Ghost, Acts xv. which we shall speak farther unto immediately.

Having seen the original of church synods or their formal cause, we consider also their material cause, or the subject matter to be treated of or determined in them. And this in general is every thing wherein churches are obliged to hold communion among themselves, when any thing falls out amongst them, which otherwise would disturb that communion. And hereof some instances may be given.

1. Churches have mutual communion in the profession of the same faith. If any doubts or differences do arise about it, any opinions be advanced contrary unto it, either in any particular church, which they cannot determine among themselves or among sundry churches, the last outward means for the preservation of the rule of faith among them, and of their communion in the condemnation of errors and opinions contrary unto the form of wholesome words, is by these synods or councils. The care hereof, is indeed in the first place committed unto the churches themselves,

as was at large before declared: but in case through the subtlety, prevalency, and interest of those by whom damnable doctrines are broached, the church itself whereunto they do belong, is not able to rebuke and suppress them; nor to maintain its profession of the truth, or that by suffering such things in one church, others are in danger to be infected or defiled, this is the last external refuge that is left for the preservation of the communion of churches in the same faith. We have multiplied examples hereof in the primitive churches, before the degeneracy of these synods into superstition and domination. Such was eminently that gathered at Antioch for the condemnation of the heresies of Paulus Samosatenus the bishop of that church.

2. It is so, with respect unto that order, peace, and unity, wherein every particular church ought to walk in itself, and amongst its own members. There were schisms, divisions, strife, and contentions in some of the churches that were of apostolical planting and watering: so there was at Antioch, and afterward at Corinth, as also of some of the churches in Galatia. The duty of remedying and healing these divisions and differneces from what cause soever they arise, is first incumbent on each particular member in every such church. Unto them it is given in charge by the apostle in the first place; and if every one of them do perform their duty in love, an end will be put unto all strife. In case of failure therein, the whole church is charged in the exercise of its power, authority, and wisdom, to rebuke and compose such differences. But in case it is not able so to do, as it fell out in the church at Antioch, then an assembly of other churches walking in actual communion with that church wherein the difference is arisen, and thereon concerned in their prosperity and edification, by their messengers and delegates, is the last outward means for its composure.

3. Where there hath been any maladministration of discipline, whereby any members of a church have been injured, as suppose they are unduly cast out of the church by the power and interest of some Diotrephes; or that any members of the church make a party and faction to depose their elders, as it was in the church of Corinth, when the church at Rome gave them advice in the case: it is necessary from the communion of churches and the interest the persons in-

jured have in the catholic church, whose edification is the end of all church administrations, that the proceedings of such a church be renewed by a synod, and a remedy provided in the case. Nor was it the mind of the apostle that they should be left without relief, which were unduly cast out of the church by Diotrephes; nor is there any other ordinary way hereof, but only by synods; but this case I suppose I shall speak unto afterward.

4. The same is the case with respect unto worship, as also of manners and conversation. If it be reported or known by credible testimony that any church hath admitted into the exercise of divine worship any thing superstitious or vain, or if the members of it walk like those described by the apostle, Phil. iii. 18, 19. unto the dishonour of the gospel and of the ways of Christ, the church itself not endeavouring its own reformation and repentance; other churches walking in communion therewith, by virtue of their common interest in the glory of Christ, and honour of the gospel, after more private ways for its reduction, as opportunity and duty may suggest unto their elders, ought to assemble in a synod for advice, either as to the use of farther means for the recovery of such a church, or to withhold communion from it in case of obstinacy in its evil ways. The want of a due attendance unto this part of the communion of churches, with respect unto gospel worship in its purity, and gospel obedience in its power, was a great means of the decay and apostacy of them all. By reason of this negligence, instead of being helpful one to another for their mutual recovery, and the revival of the things that were ready to die, they gradually infected one another, according as they fell into their decays, and countenanced one another by their examples unto a continuance in such disorders.

The image which in late ages was set up hereof in diocesan and metropolitical visitations, and those of lesser districts under officers of antichristian names, hath been useful rather unto destruction than edification. But so it hath fallen out in most things concerning church-order, worship, and discipline. The power and spirituality of divine institutions being lost, a machine hath been framed to make an appearance and representation of them to divert the minds of men from in-

quiring after the primitive institution of Christ, with an experience of their efficacy.

Considering what we have learned in these later ages, by woful experience of what hath fallen out formerly amongst all the churches in the world, as unto their degeneracy from gospel worship and holiness, with the abounding of temptations in the days wherein we live, and the spiritual decays that all churches are prone unto, it were not amiss if those churches which do walk in express communion, would frequently meet in synods to inquire into the spiritual state of them all, and to give advice for the correction of what is amiss, the due preservation of the purity of worship, the exercise of discipline, but especially of the power, demonstration, and fruit of evangelical obedience.

2. Hence it is evident what are the ends of such synods among the churches of Christ. The general end of them all is to promote the edification of the whole body or church catholic. And that, (1.) To prevent divisions from differences in judgment and practice which are contrary thereunto. The first Christian synod was an assembly of the two first churches in the world by their delegates. The first church of the Jews was at Jerusalem, and the first church of the Gentiles was at Antioch; to prevent divisions, and to preserve communion between them, was the first synod celebrated; Acts xv. (2.) To avoid or cure offences against mutual love among them. (3.) To advance the light of the gospel by a joint confession and agreement in the faith. (4.) To give a concurrent testimony against pernicious heresies or errors, whereby the faith of any is overthrown or in danger so to be. (5.) To relieve such by advice, as may be by any Diotrephes unduly cast out of the church.

What are the ends whereunto they have been used, may be seen in the volumes written concerning them, and the numberless laws enacted in them, whereof very little belongs unto the discipline of the gospel, or real communion of churches.

3. The measure or extent of them ariseth from concernment and convenience. All unprejudiced persons do now acknowledge, that the pretence of œcumenical councils, wherein the whole church of Christ on the earth, or all particular churches should be represented, and so obliged to

acquiesce in their determinations, is a fond imagination. And it were easy to demonstrate in particular, how every one of them which hath in vulgar esteem obtained that title, were openly remote from so being. Such councils never were, and, as it is probable, never will nor can be, nor are any way needful unto the edification of the church.

Their due measure and bounds, as was said before, are given them by concernment and convenience; wherein respect also may be had unto the ability of some churches to promote edification above others. Such churches as are in the same instances concerned in the causes of them before declared, and may be helpful unto the ends mentioned, are to convene in such synods. And this concernment may be either from some of those causes in themselves, or from that duty which they owe unto other churches which are immediately concerned. So it was in the assistance given by the church at Jerusalem, in that case which was peculiar to the church of Antioch.

With this interest or concernment, there must be a concurrence of natural, moral, and political conveniences. Some churches are planted at such distances from others, that it is naturally impossible that they should ever meet together to advise by their messengers, and some at such as that they cannot assemble but with such difficulties and hazards as exempt them from the duty of it. And whereas they are placed under different civil governments, and those ofttimes engaged in mutual enmities, and always jealous of the actings of their own subjects in conjunction with them that are not so, they cannot so convene and preserve the outward peace of the churches. Hence the largest of the councils of old that are called œcumenical, never pretended farther than the single Roman empire; when there were innumerable churches planted under the civil jurisdiction of other sovereigns.

Wherefore in the assembling of churches in synods, respect is to be had unto the convenience of their meeting, that it may be so far as is possible without trouble or danger. And this, with respect unto the causes or occasions of them will determine what churches, which, or how many may be necessary on such occasions to constitute a synod. And it is useful hereunto, that the churches which are planted within

such a circumference as gives facility or convenience for such conventions, should by virtue of their mutual communion, be in express readiness to convene on all occasions of common concernment.

Again, in the assistance which in the way of advice and counsel, any one church may stand in need of from others, respect is to be had in their desire, unto such churches as are reputed and known to have the best ability to give advice in the case; on which account the church at Antioch addressed themselves in a peculiar manner unto the church at Jerusalem which was far distant from them.

But in all these cases use is to be made of spiritual prudence, with respect unto all sorts of circumstances; which, although some would deny as the privilege of even matters of fact, and the application of general Scripture rules unto practice, because we require divine institution unto all parts of religious worship; yet we must not decline from using the best we have in the service of Christ and his church; rather than comply with any thing which in the whole substance of it, is foreign to his institution.

It was the Roman empire under one monarch in its civil distributions for rule and government, which gave the first rise and occasion unto a pretended visibly ruling catholic church under one spiritual monarch, distributed into those that were patriarchal, diocesan, metropolitical, and others of inferior kinds. For retaining the people in their civil distributions whereinto they were cast according to the polity and interest of the empire, there were ecclesiastical officers assigned unto each distribution, answerable unto the civil officers which were ordained in the polity of the empire. So in answer unto deputies, exarchs, præfects, governors of provinces and cities, there were found out and erected patriarchs, metropolitans, diocesans, in various allotments of territories and powers, requiring unto their complete state one visible monarchical head, as the empire had, which was the pope. And whereas the emperors had not only a civil rule and power, but a military also, exercised under them by legates, generals, tribunes, centurions, and the like; so there was raised an ecclesiastical militia in various orders of monks, friars, and votaries of all sorts, who under their immediate generals and præfects did depend absolutely on the sovereign

power of the new ecclesiastical monarch. So was the visible professing church moulded and fashioned into an image of the old Roman pagan empire, as it was foretold it should be; Rev. xiii. 13—15. And although this image was first framed in compliance with it, and for a resemblance of it; yet in process of time it substituted itself entirely in the room of the empire, taking all its power unto itself, and doing all its works.

From this distribution of various sorts of new-framed churches in the Roman empire, arose a constitution of synods or councils in subordination one unto another, until by sundry degrees of ascent they arrived unto those which they called general under the conduct of the pope, whose senate they were.

But these things have no countenance given them by any divine institution, apostolical example, or practice of the first churches, but are a mere product of secular interest working itself in a mystery of iniquity.

Since the dissolution of the Roman empire, nations have been cast into distinct civil governments of their own, whose sovereignty is in themselves, by the event of war and counsels thereon emergent. Unto each of these it is supposed there is a church-state accommodated; as the church of England, the church of Scotland, the church of France, and the like; whose original and being depends on the first event of war in that dissolution. Unto these new church-states whose being, bounds, and limits are given unto them absolutely by those of the civil government which they belong unto, it is thought meet that ecclesiastical synods should be accommodated. But in what way this is to be done there is not yet an agreement; but it is not my present business to consider the differences that are about it, which are known unto this nation on a dear account. Yet this I shall say, that whereas it is eminently useful unto the edification of the church catholic, that all the churches professing the same doctrine of faith, within the limits of the same supreme civil government, should hold constant actual communion among themselves unto the ends of it before mentioned, I see not how it can be any abridgment of the liberty of particular churches, or interfere with any of their rights which they hold by divine institution, if through more con-

stant lesser synods for advice, there be a communication of their mutual concerns unto those that are greater, until, if occasion require and it be expedient, there be a general assembly of them all to advise about any thing wherein they are all concerned. But this is granted only with these limitations: (1.) That the rights of particular churches be preserved in the free election of such as are to be members of all these synods. (2.) That they assume no authority or jurisdiction over churches or persons in things civil or ecclesiastical. (3.) That none are immediately concerned in this proper synodal power or authority (which what it is we shall inquire), who are not present in them by their own delegates.

For that kind of synods which some call a classis, which is a convention of the elders or officers of sundry parochial churches, distinguished for presential communion, ordinarily in some acts of it by virtue of their office, and for the exercise of office-power, it is the constitution of a new kind of particular churches, by a combination of them into one, whose original distinction is only in the civil limits of their cohabitation; which probably may be done sometimes, and in some places, unto edification.

4. The persons of whom all sorts of ecclesiastical synods are to consist, must be inquired into. And there is nothing of mere human prudential constitution that hath longer obtained in the church, than that those should be officers of the churches only. And, whereas after the days of the apostles we have no record of any synods of more churches than one, until after the distinction was made between bishops and presbyters, they were made up of both sorts of them. But afterward, those who were peculiarly called bishops, inclosed this right unto themselves; on what grounds God knows, there being no one tittle in the Scripture, or the light of reason to give them countenance therein.

It must therefore be affirmed, that no persons, by virtue of any office merely, have right to be members of ecclesiastical synods as such. Neither is there either example or reason to give colour unto any such pretence. Farther is no office-power to be exerted in such synods as such, neither conjunctly by all the members of them, nor singly by any

of them. Officers of the church, bishops, pastors, elders, may be present in them, ought to be present in them, are meetest for the most part so to be, but merely as such, it belongs not unto them. The care, oversight, and rule of the churches whereunto they do belong, the flock among them distinctly is committed unto them, and for that they are instructed with power and authority by virtue of their office. But as unto their conjunction in synods, which is a mere act and effect of the communion of churches among themselves, it is not committed unto them in a way of peculiar right by virtue of their office. If it be so, without respect unto the power of the magistrate in calling them, or of the churches in choosing them, then it belongs unto them all; for that which belongs unto any of them, as such by virtue of office, belongs equally unto all, and if it belongs unto all, then it belongs unto all of one sort only, as for instance bishops; or unto all of all sorts, as for instance presbyters also. If it be stated in the latter way, then every presbyter, as such by virtue of his office, hath right and power to be present in all ecclesiastical synods, equal with that of the bishops: for although it be supposed that his office is not equal unto theirs; yet it is so also that this right doth equally belong unto his office. If the former be avowed, namely, that this right belongs unto bishops only (such as are pleaded for) by virtue of their office as such; then, (1.) I desire that any tolerable proof of the confinement of this right unto such an office be produced, either from the Scripture or reason, or the example of the first churches; which as yet I have never seen. (2.) I fear not to say, that a false presumption hereof was one principal cause and means of introducing tyranny into the churches, and the utter ruin of their liberty.

Concerning the composition that is made herein, that some should convene in ecclesiastical synods by their own personal right, and in virtue of their office, and others by a kind of delegation from some of their own order, it being a mere political constitution, which I shall immediately speak unto, it is not here to be taken notice of.

There is nothing therefore in Scripture example, or the light of natural reason, with the principles of all societies in union or communion, that will lead us any farther than

this; that such synods are to be composed, and consist of such persons as are chosen and delegated by those churches respectively who do act and exert their communion in such assemblies. So was it in the first example of them, Acts xv. The church of Antioch chose and sent messengers of their own number, to advise with the apostles and elders of the church at Jerusalem; at which consultation the members of that church also were present. And this is the whole of the nature and use of ecclesiastical synods. It is on other accounts that they make up so great a part of the history of the church. For the first three hundred years, they were nothing but voluntary conventions of the officers or elders, bishops and presbyters, with some others of neighbouring churches, on the occasion of differences or heresies among them. In and from the council of Nice, there were assemblies of bishops and others called together by the authority of the Roman emperors, to advise about matters of faith. In after ages those which were called in the western parts of the world, in Italy, Germany, France, and England, were of a mixed nature advising about things civil and political, as well as sacred and religious, especially with respect unto mutual contests between popes and princes. In them the whole nature of ecclesiastical synods, was lost and buried, and all religion almost destroyed.

Thus this laudable practice of churches acting their mutual communion by meeting in synods or assemblies by their delegates or messengers, to advise about things of their common concernment and joint edification, as occasion should require, founded in the light of nature, and countenanced by primitive apostolical example, was turned by the designing interests and ambition of men, unto the instating of all church-power in such synods, and the usurpation of a power given unto no churches, nor all of them together, as might be made evident by instances innumerable.

And whereas they have made such a noise in Christian religion, and have filled so many volumes with their acts and doings, yet some of them, who under the pope, would place all religion in them, do grant and contend that they are a mere human invention: so Bellarmine affirms Pighius to have done in his book de Cœlest. Hierarch. lib. 6. cap. 1. But for his part he judgeth that it is more probable that

they have a divine original by virtue of that word; 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I will be in the midst of them;' Matt. xviii. 20. De Concil. lib. 1. cap. 3. which will not bear the least part of the superstructure pretended to be built upon it.

Of these delegates and messengers of the church, the elders or officers of them, or some of them at least, ought to be the principal. For there is a peculiar care of public edification incumbent on them, which they are to exercise on all just occasions. They are presumed justly to know best the state of their own churches, and to be best able to judge of matters under consideration. And they do better represent the churches from whom they are sent, than any private brethren can do; and so receive that respect and reverence which is due to the churches themselves. As also they are most meet to report and recommend the synodal determinations unto their churches; and a contrary practice would quickly introduce confusion.

But yet it is not necessary that they alone should be so sent or delegated by the churches; but many have others joined with them, and had so until prelatical usurpation overturned their liberties. So there were others beside Paul and Barnabas sent from Antioch to Jerusalem; and the brethren of that church, whatever is impudently pretended to the contrary, concurred in the decree and determination there made.

5. That which is termed the calling of these synods, is nothing but the voluntary consent of the churches concerned to meet together by their delegates and messengers, for the ends before declared.

I no way deny, but that a Christian magistrate may convene by his authority the bishops, pastors, or ministers, with such others as he shall think meet within his own territories; yea, and receive into his convention meet men out of the territories of others by their consent, to advise among themselves, and to give him advice about such concernments of religion, and of the church under his dominion, and regulate himself accordingly. It hath been practised with good success, and may be with bad also. And I do deny that churches have power, without the consent and authority of the magistrate, to convene themselves in synods

to exercise any exterior jurisdiction that should affect the persons of his subjects, any otherwise than by the law of the land is allowed.

But whereas the synods whereof we treat, and which are all that belong unto the church, can take no cognizance of any civil affairs wherein the persons of men are outwardly concerned; have no jurisdiction in any kind, can make no determination, but only doctrinal declarations of divine truth, of the same nature with the preaching of the word; there is no more required unto their calling beyond their own consent, but only that they may meet in external peace by the permission of the magistrate; which when they cannot obtain, they must deport themselves as in case of other duties required of them by the law of Christ.

6. In the last place I shall speak briefly of the power and authority of these synods, in what measures, extent, and numbers soever they are assembled. For although this may be easily collected from what hath been declared concerning their original, nature, causes, use, and ends; yet it may be necessary to be more particularly inquired into, because of the many differences that are about it.

There is a threefold power ascribed unto synods. The first is declarative, consisting in an authoritative teaching and declaring the mind of God in the Scripture. The second is constitutive, appointing and ordaining things to be believed, or done and observed by and upon its own authority; and thirdly, executive in acts of jurisdiction towards persons and churches.

The persons whom the authority pleaded may affect, are of two sorts. (1.) Such as have their proper representatives present in such synods, who are directly concerned in its conciliary determinations. (2.) Such as have no such representatives in them, who can be no otherwise concerned but in the doctrine materially considered, declared in them.

Wherefore the ground of any churches receiving, complying with, or obeying the determinations and decrees of synods must be; either, (1.) The evidence of truth, given unto those determinations by the synod from the Scripture; or, (2.) The authority of the synod itself affecting the minds and consciences of those concerned.

In the first way, wherein the assent and obedience of

churches is resolved ultimately into the evidence of truth from the Scripture, upon the judgment which they make thereof, not only the discovery of truth is to be owned, but there is an authoritative proposal of it by virtue of the promised presence of Christ in them, if duly sought and regarded; whence great respect and reverence is due unto them.

The power of a synod for the execution of its decrees, respects either, (1.) The things or doctrines declared; and is recommendatory of them on its authority from the presence of Christ; or, (2.) Persons; to censure, excommunicate, or punish those who receive them not.

These things being premised, the just power of synods may be positively and negatively declared in the two following assertions.

1. The authority of a synod declaring the mind of God from the Scripture in doctrine, or giving counsel as unto practice synodically unto them whose proper representatives are present in it, whose decrees and determinations are to be received and submitted unto on the evidence of their truth and necessity, as recommended by the authority of the synod from the promised presence of Christ among them, is suitable unto the mind of Christ, and the example given by the apostles, Acts xv.

Hence it is evident, that in and after such synods, it is in the power of churches concerned, humbly to consider and weigh, (1.) The evidences of the presence of Christ in them, from the manner, causes, and ends of their assembling, and from their deportment therein. (2.) What regard in their constitutions and determinations there hath been unto the word of God, and whether in all things it hath had its due pre-eminence. (3.) How all their determinations have been educed from its truth, and are confirmed by its authority.

Without a due exercise of judgment, with respect unto these things, none can be obliged by any synodical determinations; seeing without them, and on the want of them, many assemblies of bishops who have had the outward appearance and title of synods or councils, have been dens of thieves, robbers, idolaters, managing their synodical affairs with fury, wrath, horrible craft, according to their interests, unto the ruin of the church; such were the second Ephe-

sine, the second at Nice, and that at Trent, and others not a few.

Hence nothing is more to be feared, especially in a state of the church wherein it is declining in faith, worship, and holiness, than synods, according to the usual way of their calling and convention, where these things are absent. For they have already been the principal means of leading on and justifying all the apostacy which churches have fallen into. For never was there yet synod of that nature, which did not confirm all the errors and superstitions which had in common practice entered into the church, and opened a door to a progress in them; nor was ever the pretence of any of them for outward reformation of any use or signification.

2. The authority of a synod determining articles of faith, constituting orders and decrees for the conscientious observance of things of their own appointment, to be submitted unto and obeyed on the reason of authority, under the penalty of excommunication, and the trouble by custom and tyranny thereto annexed, or acted in a way of jurisdiction over churches or persons, is a mere human invention, for which nothing can be pleaded but prescription from the fourth century of the church, when the progress of the fatal apostacy became visible.

The proof of both these assertions depends on what was before declared of the nature and use of these synods. For if they are such as we have evinced, no other power or authority can be ascribed unto them but that here allowed. Yet the whole may be farther illustrated by some brief considerations of the assembly at Jerusalem in the nature of a synod, recorded Acts xv.

1. The occasion of it was a difference in the church of Antioch, which they could not compose among themselves, because those who caused the difference, pretended authority from the apostles, as is evident, ver. 1. 14.

2. The means of its convention, was the desire and voluntary reference of the matters in debate, made by the church at Antioch where the difference was, unto that at Jerusalem, whence, as it was pretended, the cause of the difference arose unto the hazard of their mutual communion, to be consulted of with their own messengers.

3. The persons constituting the synod, were the apostles,

elders, and brethren of the church at Jerusalem, and the messengers of that of Antioch, with whom Paul and Barnabas were joined in the same delegation.

4. The matter in difference was debated as unto the mind of God concerning it in the Scripture, and out of the Scripture: on James's proposal the determination was made.

5. There was nothing imposed anew on the practice of the churches, only direction is given in one particular instance as unto duty, necessary on many accounts unto the Gentile converts, namely, to abstain from fornication, and from the use of their liberty in such instances of its practice as whereon scandal would ensue, which was the duty of all Christians even before this determination, and is so still in many other instances besides those mentioned in the decree; only it was now declared unto them.

6. The grounds whereon the synod proposed the reception of and compliance with its decrees were four, (1.) That what they had determined was the mind of the Holy Ghost: 'it pleased the Holy Ghost.' This mind they knew either by inspiration, or immediate revelation made unto themselves, or by what was written or recorded in the Scripture, which on all other occasions they alleged as what was the word, and spoken by the Holy Ghost. And it is evident, that it was this latter way, namely, a discovery of the mind of the Holy Ghost in the Scripture that is intended. However, it is concluded that nothing be proposed or confirmed in synods, but what is well known to be the mind of the Holy Ghost in the Scripture, either by immediate inspiration, or by Scripture revelation. (2.) The authority of the assembly as convened in the name of Christ, and by virtue of his presence, whereof we have spoken before: 'it pleased the Holy Ghost and us.' (3.) That the things which they had determined were necessary, that is, antecedently so unto that determination; namely, the abstaining from the use of their liberty in things indifferent in case of scandal. (4.) From the duty, with respect unto the peace and mutual communion of the Jewish and Gentile churches: 'doing thus,' say they, 'ye shall do well,' which is all the sanction of their decree; manifesting that it was doctrinal, not authoritative in way of jurisdiction.

7. The doctrinal abridgment of the liberty of the Gentile Christians in case of scandal, they call the imposing of no

other burden, in opposition unto what they rejected, namely, the imposing a yoke of ceremonies upon them; ver. 10. So as that the meaning of these words is, that they would lay no burden on them at all, but only advise them unto things necessary for the avoidance of scandal. For it is impious to imagine that the apostles would impose any yoke, or lay any burden on the disciples, but only the 'yoke and burden of Christ,' as being contrary to their commission; Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

Hence it will follow, that a synod convened in the name of Christ, by the voluntary consent of several churches concerned in mutual communion, may declare and determine of the mind of the Holy Ghost in the Scripture, and decree the observation of things true and necessary, because revealed and appointed in the Scripture, which are to be received, owned, and observed, on the evidence of the mind of the Holy Ghost in them, and the ministerial authority of the synod itself.

END OF VOL. XX.

Printed by J. F. Dove, St. John's Square.